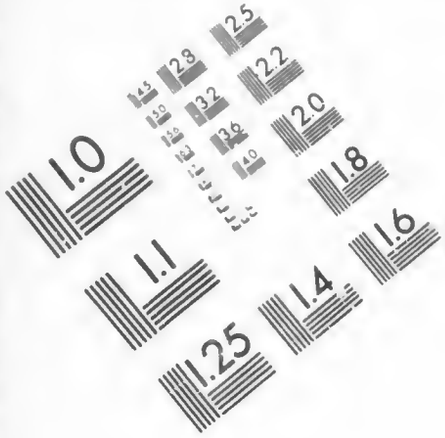

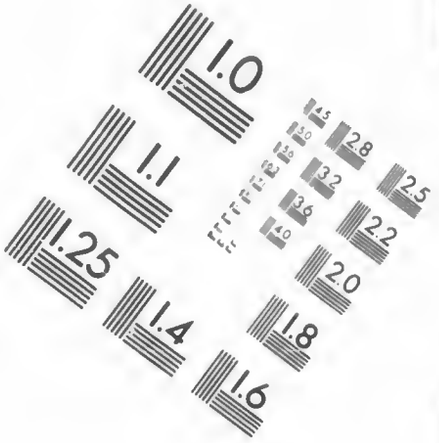

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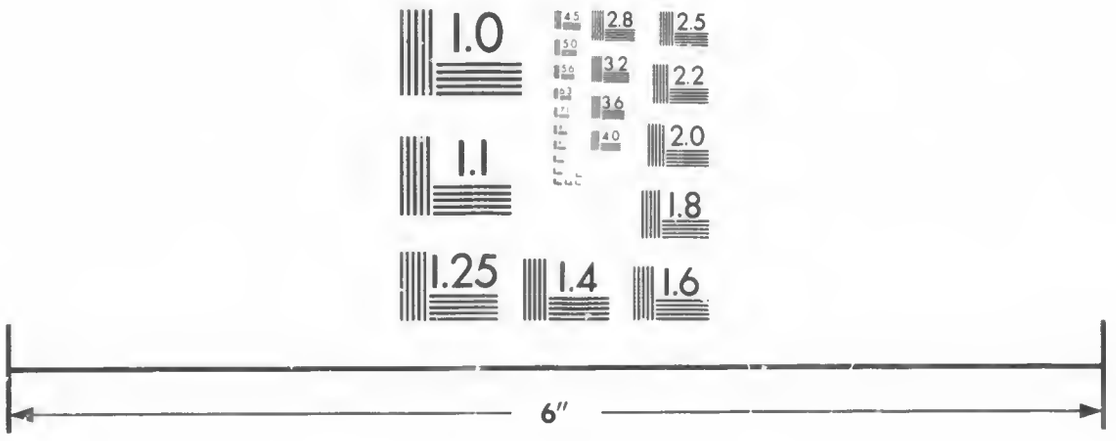

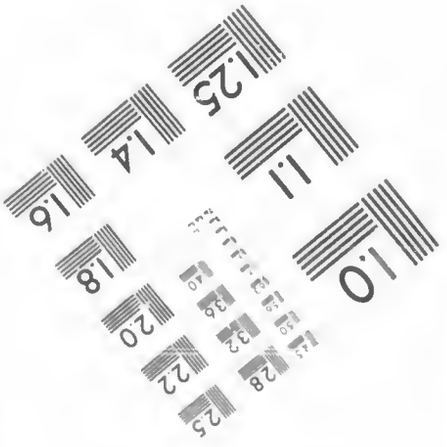

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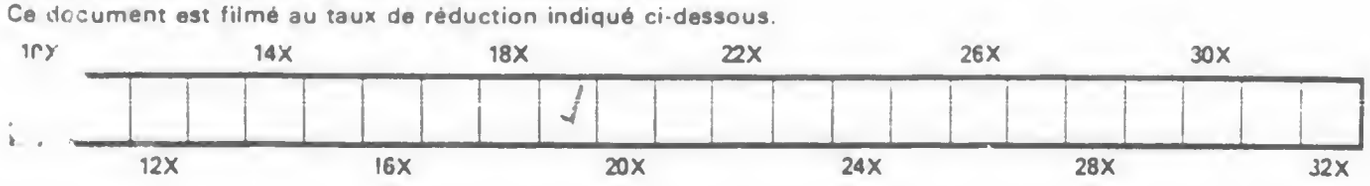

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STRONG MEN AND TRUE

THE "ONDERDONK."

"It ain't to be done," said Griffiths; "she cayn't do it, not if she busts herself."

"Well, I reckon as Andy Onderdonk ain't no slouch of a man," answered his partner Pete, "and he figures it out that she can. And them as built her figures it out so, and, taking the lot together, I'll back Andy."

"Agin the Fraser?" asked old Griff solemnly.

"Agin the Fraser," said Pete.

"Agin this yer river that's roaring below us?"

"Agin thish yer river," said Pete, and sitting down on a rock he dangled his long legs over the swift, dark stream far below him.

Griffiths sat down beside him, and, pulling out his pipe, proceeded to fill it out of a little bag with a big bull's head on it. He was a very long, thin man, of a melancholy malarial

type. For he came from Arkansas, the land of corns and frogs, of ague and saw-mills, and he carried dry quinine in his waistcoat pocket, being very subject to chills, which took him suddenly.

When his pipe was well alight, he cleared a space of gravel with his bony hand, and transferred himself to a more comfortable seat.

"Time will tell, sonny," he remarked, after a long interval, "and I dunno as ever any good came of argument. But what I asks is, do they know the river and the ways of it?"

"I reckon A. O. studies on it considerable," said Pete. For the men called the big contractor Andy or A. O., according to their moods. When he was the great boss he was A. O., and when they related what he said he was simply "Andy."

"I reckon A. O. has studied on it considerable," repeated Pete, "and he ain't a man to be fooled by a river, not even one like this, which is awkward, I allow."

Griff shrugged his shoulders.

"How long have you bin about this cañon, Pete?"

"Since the road started, old man."

"Of course you have, and how long have I bin here?"

And Pete did not answer because he knew that Griffiths would answer it himself.

"For nigh on to twenty years," said Griffiths, gloomily, "and I'm as rich now as I was then. But I know this river. You've never seen it rise, Pete, but I have. It can go higher than we are here. And it's a blind roaring hells o' waters then. Oh, yes, I know as A. O. don't propose to run his boat then, but what I'd like to know is where he'll tie her up to wait for no more than a common every-day sort of current. Can you name any place?"

But Pete shook his head.

"And any time you can't trust the Fraser," said Griff. "Have you watched her day in and day out? There ain't no reckoning and figuring as will put a man equal to a river in a cañon like this yer cañon, that's narrow and black. This river's like a man in a tight place. You may know a man for years when things goes easy, and you can prophesy straight as to what he'll do. So to speak, he's just a river as runs in a broad place, and ain't squeezed nor crushed nor put about. Why, you know as well as you know your

own knife or your own gun as he'll work so long and then have a bit of a jamboree, and go back to work again. But if he's a moss-back with a heavy mortgage on him, and his wife's a cultus lot and his boys cultus too, as won't work, and a bad season comes and his house is burnt up—why, can you prophesy on him then?"

"Um," said Pete, who was considering in a sort of brown study the dreadful position of the imaginary farmer.

"Of course you can't," cried Griff in a sort of melancholy triumph. "And that's the river here, crushed up in this cañon. It runs here at ten miles an hour and there at fifteen, and at times all the current is below the surface, and then there's whirly pools. Oh, I tell you it's hell; and I says as Andy Onderdonk won't pull this off for all he's a clever man, and, for that matter, a good sort in his way. His derned new steamer ain't going to run more'n one trip here, and I'm sorry for the widows as is wives now."

And he rose up, knocked his pipe out on the heel of his boot, and walked to his old shanty.

But meanwhile on a long, low island in the river many men were working at the very object of all Griffiths' melancholy forebodings.

Carriage just there was very expensive, and Andy Onderdonk had hit on the notion of a steamer to run from Boston Bar to Lytton and back, to save haulage. So he sent to Victoria, and they brought him a small, swift steamer in numbered pieces, with men to put her together. She came in the train as far as Yale, and then by wagon to just below Lytton. She was guaranteed to run fifteen knots an hour.

"And that will get her over the worst riffles," said Andy. But the river knew better than that, and so did the men who put the *Onderdonk* together.

They discussed the matter over their riveting, over their grub, and before falling asleep. Even before Andy they were not running full of hope. They sometimes almost asked him to discount disaster.

"You can't tell that a boat will run up to her contract time just at first, sir," said the foreman. "And this boat must or—"

"If she doesn't," said Andy, "why, it can't be helped."

"But do you know the river, sir?" asked the foreman. "It looks a chancy sort of a place. I own I wouldn't like to be on her on her trial trip."

"Oh, she'll do it," said Andy. For he was a big, strong, hopeful man, full of red blood and the love of natural conquest. It is such men who dominate the big world and elude what cannot be struck down or fought with.

And now was the day when the *Onderdonk* was eased sideways into the stream, on the very edge of which she had been put together. They fitted the last of the stern-wheel as she lay in the water, being held with two big hawsers from the island and the high opposing bank. Then the two engineers got up steam. She was easy to fire, and the furnace worked like a charm.

The pressure rose over a hundred, and crawled up to a hundred and forty. Then the men's nerves got on edge, for the time was coming, and Andy was on deck with one-armed King and his brother Bill, the two best pilots of the lower river—men of nerve and knowledge, and ready skill in moments of danger.

"But this is all experiment, Mr. Onderdonk," said King, "and it all depends on what she can do. And even then—"

"Oh, dry up," said Andy, rather fretfully. And King winked at his brother. They were the only two calm men there.

Now, on the opposing bank stood the whole population of Lytton, who had come down stream for a mile to see if Andy's experiment was going to be a success or not. The very hotel bars in the little town were deserted—even the stolid Indians came to look on. They brought their klootchmen, and the klootchmen brought their papooses.

And on the island stood the workmen, the engineers and fitters who had fixed the boat up for her struggle with the river.

Perhaps the Fraser's upper waters in the far and frozen north chuckled as they rolled turbidly to the river's junction. The blue Thompson, north and south fork, laughed, and the big lakes were stirred as they poured out their crystal waters through the smaller cañons in the dry belt of alkali land. And where the Thompson lost its name, and the married streams rushed as one for the great cañon, they seemed bitter and sulky and black.

Who was this insect man to play with the ancient and tremendous majesty of their unpolluted waters? Let him, if he would, dally with the broad floods where they were peaceful and serene, where they rested from their labours in the loftier hills, but they bade

him stand aside when they clove asunder the big black range that barred them from the Pacific and the great deep.

And now the stern-wheel began to move, and, as it dashed the water into foam, the strain slackened on the hawsers.

"Stand by to cast them off when I sing out," roared King, as he stood by his brother, who held the wheel. "Full speed, Jack!"

And the engineer opened her out. The hawsers ceased singing and dipped into the waters, which caught them and pulled. The starboard hawser was in the main stream, and, as the boat began to move swiftly in the shelter of the island, it lay out in a long curve, marking the sullen flood with a line of breaking waves. But now it dragged heavily, and sheered the boat's bows perceptibly into the stream.

"Let go," roared King; but, even as he shouted, Andy seized an axe and cut the hawser with two clean blows. The other one was cast off, and the first voyage of the little *Onderdonk*, Andy's darling, daring child, was begun.

For a minute, even for two, she shot swiftly and more swiftly yet past the island, and to those who did not understand the

river it seemed as though victory was assured.

"Look," cried Pete, "look!"

"Ay, look, and look again," said Griffiths. "Wait till she's in the Fraser, man. For by God! she's got to face it all. Oh, ho! face the big music, Andy! This ain't no easy Mississippi; you cayn't dodge her by crawling close in shore. She's equal from bank to bank in the open. Ay, look, look!" he shouted.

And, as he called, an odd sound ran out of the crowd, and it seemed as if a mist obscured the sun.

For, as the steamer shot up past the island, she met the Fraser full, and stopped almost dead. To those on board it seemed as if she had run on a soft bank and lay there.

"Give it her, give it her," said King to the engineer, who had his head out in the open.

"She's got every pound, and more," cried the engineer.

And for one long, one incredibly long, minute the boat hung in the stream, making inch by inch. But, even so, she scarcely seemed a mere thing made by man. She was alive and desperate, an active creature overpowered by brutal strength. She

creaked and quivered, and the rivets gave here and there, and the very deck heaved and bent like thin ice as a daring skater speeds over it. For the foam stood up against her bows, and the two deck hands forward were paralyzed.

Until this day they had not known the river; they had only watched it from the banks. Now they were in the hollow of the hand of something mightier and more awful than the open sea, and, for all the power of steam and the strength of proved steel, they were like ants on a chip in a mountain torrent. They whitened visibly, and their under lips hung down.

Even Andy weakened.

"Can she do it?" he cried.

And, even as King looked over him with set jaws and the ghost of a smile on his face, the vessel moved to starboard in spite of the helm. Over the hiss of the waters came the groan of the crowd, and the very voices of separate men were distinct. He heard Pete cry out, and he saw old Griff throw up his arms almost with joy. For the old man was on the side of the river.

"She's done, she's done," said he. And he ran down stream, knowing that in a

minute or two the steamer would yield utterly.

And as he ran King gave way and jammed the helm hard over to port to let her go, to save her from the rocks on the other side to which her nose pointed. He yelled to the engineer, "Stop her!"

Then she was a chip on the waters. But, after one breathless and helpless minute, which took them almost to the lower end of the island from which they had started, King called again to the engineer:

"Full speed ahead!"

And though the men below were bidding good-bye to the things of the upper air, they opened her up again. As he got a little steerage way on her, King put the helm hard over again and stranded her in the only spot sheltered from the stream. A cheer went up from the running crowd. For the victory of the river was not complete.

"I did my best," said King.

"I guess you did," said Andy. "Tie her up."

And he went ashore by a plank thrust out from the bows. As his feet crunched on the gravel he felt as though he had not known the solid earth for strange long years, so

extreme in concentrated expectation of imminent disaster had been the last few minutes. He sat down on a rock and considered his namesake stranded on the rocks but unhurt.

"King," he called, presently.

"Sir," answered King from the little pilot house.

"This isn't put through."

"How?" said King.

"We mucked it," said Andy, whose pure United States dialect was sometimes oddly fouled by extraneous slang. For among his men were the cream and the scum of all ends of the earth.

"We did," said King, brightly, spitting into the river.

"Any good trying again?"

"Make her a twenty-knot boat and I'll try."

"It can't be done at the price," said Andy. "But this trip isn't through."

"How?" said King again. And his brother Bill came on deck.

"What shall I do mit?" said Andy in familiar shorthand.

"Tote her in wagons up to the lakes," said Bill.

"I'll not touch a rivet," said Andy. "And I'll have her on the lower river. What'll you take her there for, King?"

Neither of the brothers spoke, but both turned and looked down the long cañon. And what they saw with their eyes was nothing. In their minds they beheld the worst of the tortured stream below the bar. Could it be done at all?

"It spells out in dollars, Mr. Onderdonk," said King.

"I never reckoned it in cents," replied Andy, as he threw a bit of drift quartz into the river.

The brothers spoke together for a moment.

"It could be done with three men," said King, presently; "but they must be hired."

"That's so," said Andy.

"There's me and Bill here. And the engineer."

"There ain't the engineer," said Bill.

"No?" asked Andy. "Won't he?"

"Not if I know him. It took trouble to get him this morning. But we'll find a man."

"I'll give two thousand dollars to have her safe at Yale," said Andy.

"We'll take three," answered King.

"Say two and half."

"And three to our widows if—"

"If I lose the boat?" said Andy.

"That's so, Mr. Onderdonk. And fair enough."

And Andy considered.

"Done," he said. "And you find the engineer?"

King nodded.

"But you will have her ready, with her nose down stream, and properly fixed, Mr. Onderdonk?"

"Of course. How long will you be getting to Yale?"

"It's fifty miles," said King. "Or say forty-five. The stream runs over fifteen; we can do fifteen. An hour and three-quarters, say two hours, Mr. Onderdonk. We shall be there."

"But bring the steamer," said Andy with a smile. "I'd come with you, but I've too many people depending on me."

And he walked ashore from the little island by a high plank bridge.

"I believe he would," said King. And Bill nodded.

Tracey's Hotel at Lytton was mighty full that night, and, for the matter of that, some of

the men were fuller. And one of them was the engineer whose nerve had not been quite equal to the strain. He lay under a side table with his head on a stray gripsack. Pete and Old Griffiths were sitting hard by and were not drunk, though Pete was not quite sober.

"What did I tell you?" asked Griff for the twentieth time since Andy's hope had gone on the rocks.

"Oh, don't rub it in," said Pete, a little sulkily, "I ain't a Chinaman. If I was off it, so was Andy, and he's a dern sight smarter than most betwixt the Cascades and the Rockies. And he had the sand to go on her."

"You mean that for me?" said Griffiths, pathetically, as he pulled at the knots in his ragged grey beard.

"You could have had the job. Now, couldn't he?" cried Pete, appealing to the crowd at the bar, which included the two Kings.

"What job?"

"Engineer on Andy's boat."

Old Griff got up.

"And what for should I take the position, when I knowed she couldn't face the river, not longer than a man swimmin'?"

"Would you take it to go down stream in her?" asked one-armed King. And all the crowd laughed. It seemed so impossible.

"Well, I don't know as I mightn't be hired to do that," said Griff, with his head on one side and his eyes on the floor. He looked like a ragged and humorous but melancholy vulture. "For there's a big difference, the biggest sort of difference, between the two things. Figuring on the flow of this yer river, I, as have know'd it for years, knowed it couldn't be done. But to go down might be done. It's only dangerous; but not impossible. That's where the difference is."

That raised a subtle metaphysical argument. For one man argued that where a very great number of dangers existed which "no man couldn't avoid," why, that was just the same as impossible.

"You don't see it, don't you?" sneered Griffiths. "Well, and if you don't, who looked for you to? But there's just the difference between jumping up to the top of a big fir tree and jumping off the top of the same. You haven't no logic, no real logic. That's always your fault, Simons. Now, I remember—"

"No wauwau," said Tracey. "Keep your bearings cool."

And the crowd laughed. But King called Griffiths over. "Would you really take the engineer's job if Andy wanted to send her down to Yale, now?"

"I would," said Griffiths, stubbornly.

"Then you can have the job," said King. "For we're going in the morning."

Griffiths looked rather as if he had been trapped, but he said nothing. Bill King called for drinks.

"Step up, boys, and drink to Andy and the boat and me and my brother and Griffiths here. For we are going to take her to Yale in the morning."

"You don't mean it, Mr. King?" said Tracey.

And the crowd was silent for a moment, and then a buzz came, and then silence again as of awe. For in their minds they saw the little steamer in the narrow terror of the stream, and then they saw these living men of that hour drifting in the big pool above Yale. A buzz rose again, and deepened to a subdued roar.

"Great Scot! it's murder of Andy to do it."

"What's he giving us, taffy?"

"No, no; two thousand dollars."

"Two thousand five hundred."

"And three to the widders."

King laughed.

"But there won't be none, boys. Say what's your drink."

Tracey intervened.

"This is mine," he said. "I'm paying for this. And when you come up again, Mr. King—why, it's yours."

And King nodded. In the midst of the talk he and his brother slipped into the dining-room, which, if as dirty as the bar, was at any rate quieter. And there they wrote letters home. Then they called Griffiths.

"Why, no," said he, "I ain't got none to write. Pete is my only partner. And if I goes under—why, I goes. But we haven't fixed the price."

"Two hundred," said King.

"Three," said Griffiths. "And two hundred down for Pete if we don't come out."

And the brothers looked at each other and nodded.

"I'll make it right with Andy," said the elder. "And now turn in, Griff. At least,

don't drink. You'll want your nerve in the morning."

"I don't drink so much," said Griff. "If I did, me and Pete would have tough times."

For Pete did drink.

He was weeping in their shack when Griff came in. And as Griff fell asleep he heard his partner blubber and repeat again and again, "Poor old Griff will be drowned; he'll be drowned." But when he woke up, Pete was getting breakfast ready as though he were preparing some dreadful sacrament.

"I haven't been a good partner to you, Griff," said Pete: "but when you come back, I'll knock off drinking."

"Good old man," said Griff.

By ten o'clock in the morning the *Onderdonk* was in position, with the bight of a hawser holding her by the stern, and two warps from her bows. She was not making any water to speak of, for she had taken the ground very easily.

All the population of Lytton was strung out along the bank for five miles below the boat. For each man took up his position according to his notion as to where the necessary catastrophe would happen. It would be fine to see the last of her going

triumphantly through danger; but suppose she never got a mile? The fear of it crowded most near the starting place. The further they went the more hopeful they were in Andy's star.

A. O. himself was on the beach from dawn, directing operations, and only at nine did the Kings and Griffiths come down. Pete came with them to say good-bye.

"Your word is sufficient about the money, sir," said the one-armed King, as he went aboard after shaking hands with the contractor. "But Griffiths' partner is to have two hundred dollars if we don't get through."

"Right," said Andy, looking at Pete with some disfavour, for he did not like such casual workers as Pete. "Are you ready?"

"Are you, Griffiths?" asked King.

And Griffiths shoved his head out of the stokehold and engine-room in one. He nodded. "Good-bye, Pete!"

"Good-bye be dauned! I'm coming," said Pete.

And, scrambling on board, he dropped down below. But he was really wanted.

"Stand by to let go, Pete," said the elder King.

For Bill took the wheel. "If you are here,

you can do that. Let g[illegible] starboard head rope."

And Pete slacked it off a bollard, and chucked the end overboard. The warp from the port bow was made fast to a tree a good bit down stream on the left bank.

"Take the axe, Pete, and cut the port head rope when I say so. Go ahead half speed with the engines, Griff."

And the stern-wheel thrashed the waters into foam till the steamer strained the stern-fast into rigid bars.

"Now, boys," said King, "I'm going to cut the hawser aft. And when I cut she starts."

He took the axe in his one hand, and with two blows severed the middled hawser. The next moment the boat was in the current; the crowd sobbed with indrawn breath, and moaned strangely. They heard it on board like the wail of wind in brush.

"Cut, Pete," said the pilot. And, even as Pete's axe fell, they were running down stream at twenty-three or four miles an hour, and the black banks slid eastward like a vision in a nightmare.

"Keep her in the middle, Bill, and watch my hand."

And the pilot stood on the bows alone, for Pete was below helping Griff to fire. He passed the heavy wood in utter silence. But the two partners had shaken hands.

The news of the strange venture of these men had run down stream even in the night. For one passed it to another, and Boston Bar knew it and Spuzzum was awake to it, and all dwellers in the cañon knew. The trains running to Yale knew, and those who travelled looked out from the cars, expecting the sudden advent of a disabled steamer drifting even to Hope—below the last bad riffle.

The men building the bridge in the cañon could do no work. They took their half day off and spoke low as they sat on the unfinished cantilever and called to each other over the swift, black stream. The odd Chinamen grubbing in the cracks of the rocks for the dusty drift of scanty gold felt it, and asked stray white men what was coming. For they thought it might be that the Upper Fraser was in flood. They crawled to the higher banks and watched.

But the time of the watchers was long, and men galloping down the road and climbing Jackass Mountain, where the road climbs, found the way long; while to those on board

it was one swift and very awful moment in which the strained mind sometimes almost went to sleep.

"She hasn't any too good steerage way on her, Hank," said Bill.

"Give her a bit more," cried the pilot to his engineer without turning round. How could he lift his set eyes from the terrible stream over which he ran now? They glanced through space and came round the great circle of the man-worried Boston Bar which had held so much gold, and now, the first half was done. But here the waters narrowed and the stream boiled, and treacherous mad eddies struck the rudder and nearly wrenched out Bill's strong muscles from their hold.

He sweated in streams; he seemed dizzy; he prayed for keen sight, and bent his shaggy brows for shelter from the dripping sweat. He wondered if he could last out the next half-hour which would save or end them. And what of the Hell Gate, where the straitest pass was?

His brother at the bows stood like a carved man. He never spoke, nor looked from the stream whose secrets he had tried to win. But a thousand years on the waters below

could teach him nothing of the river here. Old Griff had been right and strangely true when he compared the tortured river to a tortured man. Who could prophesy?

But they passed, they passed, and yet one peril brought another, and the river seemed alive—a python, something real, something subtly, devilishly intellectual, capable of foresight, of traps laid and led up to, of odd calm before passionate storm. He knew he was playing a game, and the stakes were life; if he won, he won money, but something far more than money to a real man whose ambitions were not the vile distortions of a town.

He would win a big and desperate struggle with nature; he would win a memory, and stand up with that fair pride which so adorns a man who has looked in the very eyes of fate, and by good endowment has come out of the godlike struggle laid on true men since the world began. Oh, better to die so than to elude the task and perish at ease by slow and rusting failure of unused faculties.

He knew all this, and yet he did not know it. But in such men's faces this knowledge is written, and written plain, and is read even by the little fat kind who claim to judge them from easy chairs.

And now even those below knew that the crisis was at hand. They had heard the cheer of men at the Bar; they had heard it rise and culminate and fade as they swept past. They had peered out and seen the cañon close in, but now they felt the swell and surge beneath as though they rode upon the top of a bubbling curve. Thrice and yet again Pete fell as he lifted a piece of wood; his face was bleeding, and in his hands were sharp splinters. Old Griff stood blackly with his hand on the lever, and his ears straining for the signal. It came at last.

"Full speed!"

For, even though they were now almost up with Hell Gate, the currents were so many, and so strangely mixed, that the boat did not steer as she had done. More than once she only missed a submerged rock by a hair's breadth, because she hung stubbornly against the rudder and seemed sulky. For the boat itself was now a living, breathing, and fearful thing to those she carried, who drove her as one drives a mad horse escaping from a fire upon the prairie.

"We're nigh on to Hell Gate," said Pete.

"Get on deck," said his partner.

"No."

"Get on deck," said Griff.

And Pete went up and stood where he could look down on his partner. He stared forward, and saw King at the bows. Beyond him was the close gap of the Gate. Then he saw King come aft. He smiled at Pete, and spoke to his brother.

"Don't look at me, Bill. If you can keep her straight, do. I'm sorry I've not two arms, or I'd give you a spell."

He walked back again to his station. He had left it as he knew that just there nothing depended on his sight. And doing it might encourage his brother, whom he could not help otherwise. Besides, he wanted to look at him once more—in case—

And he thought of his wife down at Yale. Did she know? Would they tell her? No, of course not; they were not such fools as that. Surely not. But if they did not get through! Ah—here is the Gate, the jaws of Hell.

And somehow the boat appeared to hang and stick, and the huge rocks on each side only crawled towards him. Were they in? Yes, he said, and then for the first time the boat seemed to rise and dip and the waters stood up over him. Next moment he found

himself flat on the deck with his one arm about a stanchion, and, looking up, he saw his brother whirl the wheel round. He rose and staggered and got to his place again. Yes, they were through the Gate. And the pace seemed to increase even yet, and the last few minutes passed like a flash. He motioned "port" or "starboard" with his hand, and then he heard men shouting overhead. He did not look up, and was quite unconscious of the bridge builders, whose hazardous work was so strangely without danger compared with this mad trip of unnumbered centuries.

Then, as he stood wondering if these ranked years would ever drift by, he heard Bill call to him.

"Hank, Hank!"

And as he turned he did not know they were sliding down the last rapid into the big pool above Yale, which meant safety. But he saw Bill stagger and he got up to him in time, and only in time, to catch the wheel in his one hand and whirl it back. Bill fell and struck his head and he saw the blood run on the deck. And yet he did not mind. For here was the pool. And a black crowd stood on the rails and came running through

one of the tunnels, and he heard them cheer madly. He even fancied he saw his wife sitting on a rock. And then the crowd ran back towards home as he crossed the pool and came round in sight of Yale.

He sighed oddly and felt unsteady, but there was a wonderful feeling of most infinite solacement about him. He was at peace with the whole world And he ran the steamer on the sloping beach below the little town. For Pete without orders had slowed her down. A crowd on the beach made the boat fast and rushed on board. They tried to shake hands with him, but he waved them aside and said,—

"Look after Bill."

And when he walked ashore he sat down, and the solid earth whirled about him. He came to in the arms of his wife.

"It wasn't right, Hank," she sobbed.

"Cheer up, old girl," said he. "I know it wasn't. But I've done the cañon."

And Pete and Griffiths came by in the midst of a wild crowd. One solitary journalist who sent news to Victoria buzzed outside the circle. For King's wife drove him away.

"A. O. will be glad," said King.

"He ought to be lynched," said his wife.

But King did not think so. That afternoon he went on foot to the pool, and looked up the cañon with a strange expression on his face.

"By the Lord, but I always wanted to do it!" he said.

A DEAD TRAMP.

It was one of the most accursed days of summer on the south Rocky Mountain Plateau, which is really a burnt and broken plain, that George Harper entered Santa Fé with his blankets on his back. He had tramped from Denver to Pueblo, he had "counted ties" along the railroad from Pueblo to near Garland, and from Garland again had hoofed it to Santa Fé.

As he saw the blatant, barren city in its circling ring of barren mountains, it seemed worse than Garland, much worse even than half-forgotten Pueblo, where he had met a "white man" who had given him a square meal and grubstaked him to the tune of four bits, or half a dollar, and a thousand times more futile than well-built, lofty Denver, the great city of the Plateau which had yet denied him a living. The town was half asleep in a great and sultry heat, and the mean, brown building looked little more than adobé, while callous, unintelligent, and obtuse Apaches

walked hither and thither or loafed under a verandah. Some dogs lay in the dust, a solitary team of half-starved horses pulled in a far-brought load of mesquite wood. But the town itself and the white men who ran it were somnolent.

Harper was marked for a tramp and a low down tramp by the very possession of blankets. For the respectable American, who is out of a job, prefers to suffer and walk, if he has to "hit the road," with nothing more than a gripsack and a light overcoat. And more than the blankets marked the man as a tramp. He was brown, and thin, and lean, and hungry, and a long succession of defeats in the bitter conflict of an outcast's life has given him, for the time at least, an air of subjection. He looked rather for his fellows than for any successful man who might give him help and not a kick on the downward road. And in the Plaza he found many.

For though it was so bitterly hot, it was after all only the early spring which had come in with an unusually warm spell. And the tramps who are for ever tramps and do no work were now on their slow migration to the north. They came into Santa Fé from Yuma and from Tucson on the Southern Pacific, they

drifted up from Mexico, and the border by El Paso, they came through El Paso from the Texas Pacific, and when they were once on the northern railroad they hung to it as only tramps can who are hungering to steal a ride in a freight train to put them some easy miles towards a far and fleeting El Dorado.

And to this George Harper was descending fast. But a few more months of tie counting, but a little more of "bumming" grub, but a few more lightly thought of thefts of a stray chicken, and the young fellow from the East whom a woman had made a fool of would be even as those with whom he chummed in on the Plaza at Santa Fé.

He slung his blankets off his shoulder and dumped them by the most friendly-looking of the outcasts, a man with grizzled hair, marked by one heavy silver lock over the forehead, and a ragged beard.

"Howdy, partner?" said George.

And the sitting tramp nodded easily.

"Which way are you hoofin' it?" he asked.

"South," said George.

"El Paso?"

"I reckon so."

"It's a hell of a hole," said the tramp. "I'm for Denver. Have you done any chewin' to-day?"

"Haven't had a bit to eat since yesterday," answered George gloomily.

"Then you've struck a mighty poor show for a hand-out here. That's what you have," said the old man with an air of bitter conviction. "They'd sooner sling it to the hogs than give it a *man*."

He laid a heavy emphasis on the "man." And so he might, for even he had been a man once, till disaster brought drink, and drink the devil, and the devil mere animality.

"I tell you what," said he presently, as he sucked at a pipe empty of tobacco, "if you're very keen on chewin' I'll take you just outside o' the town. I marked an old bum stow away some bread and bacon in a prairie-dog hole as I came by. And I ain't nothing to do, and fair ache with squatting on my hunkers. Are you on?"

And George nodded. They walked together towards the southern end of the town.

"What's takin' you south, pard?" asked the tramp.

"About what's taking you north, I guess," said George Harper, eyeing his man.

"That's so," said the other; "we want suthin' we ain't likely to get. And on we go. I've bin south and I've bin north this ten years, and now I'm old, and haven't no friends but them I meets hitting the road. We go because we must."

And he sucked at his pipe philosophically.

"You don't happen to have a fill on you?" he asked presently.

But George shook his head. And they came to the outskirts of the town.

"It was nigh here, it was," said the philosopher, "for I seed him do it. Ah, here it is, if he ain't come back and sneaked it."

And lying down he extracted a dirty parcel from the depths of an ancient hole long ago deserted by the animals who excavated it.

And George Harper promptly ate it.

"No," said the old man when he offered him some, "no, I'm full up to my back teeth, or I wouldn't have give it away. When I was around the back of the deepo I found a hell of a pile of grub this morning slung away by some of them as works there. I struck it rich. Why, man, there was pie in it, there was pie."

And he worked his lean jaws in beautiful remembrance.

"So you're goin' south, pard. Well, I wouldn't go south myself, for there ain't anything to be done; they don't want you. But north is a chance. Did you hear of any railroad work starting up as you come by?"

"No," said George as he finished his squalid meal.

"But there is some," insisted the old man, "up towards the Cascades."

For this is the mark of the tramp, that he is going to work. He is always going to work, and then he dies unknown, despised, unheeded, and gives some folks a very small job, even if the folks are but the rats in a culvert into which he crawls in his last agony.

"Oh, you bet there's a railroad starting up," he said more cheerfully. "And now, young fellow, I'm going back to the city."

"Thank you for showing me the grub pile," said George, "for I think I'll count ties to the southward."

And the two shook hands.

"So long, partner," they said, and then George was ploughing over a sand dune for the telegraph posts which marked the railroad to Rincon and El Paso.

He walked on the ties between the rails all

day long with a stolid, heavy persistence. Each few minutes he passed a telegraph post all askew, warped by the weight of wire and the heat of the southern sun. And as he went the dreary horizon receded, the rails still ran together and melted in a hazy line which pointed south with its long iron finger. Once he moved off for the north-bound express to pass, and twice he left the line for some slower freights, but even when the passenger went by he hardly looked up. What were all these folks to him? He could hardly envy them: they were of another world, another lighter world than his. And yet he remembered the old Michigan days and his happier life. What weakness was in him that had taken him out of the ranks of those who win success? His very dreaminess would have given the answer. His was the nature that needs success to be successful.

And he went on through the day, and was twenty miles to the south of Santa Fé when he camped under a rotting stack of ties. The next morning the woman at a section house gave him a little breakfast. "There's small-pox down the road at the next place," she said rather kindly. "I'd not go through it if I were you."

"Thank you, ma'am," he answered, "I'll go round."

But he went near enough to see the stricken Mexican houses draped with yellow, and he fancied he saw a funeral. He went to windward of the town, and as he turned aside he wondered why he did it. What did it matter? For a moment he was half inclined to go back and ask if he could do anything with the dead and for the living. But he half sneered at himself and went on.

By now George Harper was almost past asking for work. For many many months he had asked, and had been refused. Some said he was not strong enough, and to those who asked if he could do this or that he had been compelled to answer "no." He had none of the insistence which gets work; it was not given him by fate to answer "but I can learn." He wanted success first and an assured way and good direction before he could be useful.

But he still asked sometimes, and in the next week he earned a dollar or two at a section while a man was ill. The work and the sense of doing something cheered him; even when he was discharged the ring of pleasant silver made him feel a man. He

remembered once having a thousand dollars. That meant he might command the work of a thousand men for a day. It was a great feeling. Money once more would lift him out of the dust and make him a man.

Yet by the time he had drifted on through Rincon he was again without a cent, and his boots were far gone. He was very desolate, but more stolid than ever. It did not matter. Who cared? What did anything matter? He felt like a useless foolish yellow dog, a dog that could do nothing and was not even vicious enough to be tied by a chicken-coop to keep away a common cowardly tramp.

And that day he tramped till it was late. He might have walked on till it was dark, save that he stayed to rest at a bridge over a very deep gulch past Rincon. And he noticed that there was a fire burning under the bridge. For a moment he imagined it to be the work of a tramp. Then he saw it flicker and blaze in some of the woodwork and he knew the fire was the deed of a hot coal dropped from the fire-box of the last locomotive which had passed that way.

The bridge was five miles, full five miles, from the last section house. How far the

next one was he could not tell, and yet he began to feel a little excited. Suppose a train came round the next curve. For here the line bent sharply to the west. If it did, though it could get over now, in a very few minutes it might be too late. He wondered what he ought to do.

And then a cold fit came on him and for a little while he did not care. For again and yet once more, who cared for him?

But that fit did not last, and it was well for George Harper that it did not, both on earth and for the sake of heaven, if there be any heaven above the earth. His imagination, dulled for long months by starvation, by want of money, by contempt, by isolation, by denial of brotherhood, rose and flamed like the flames that ate up the lower bents of the complex bridgework. In his mind he saw a train come into the fire, he heard the crack of the burning wood, he saw the bridge give, he beheld the cars topple into the abyss. And after one awful crash, repeated as each separate car dropped on those below, he heard the cries of men, women and children screaming in the inexorable flame.

No, it could not be! But how was he to stay it, since he had not even a match?

He dropped his blankets and stood for one stupefied moment, and then leapt down into the gulch. He tore his ragged clothes from his back, he bled from the venomous scratches of sharp thorns, he struck his shin against a jagged rock. But he got down to the fire, and taking a handful of hot embers and one piece of flaming wood, he put them into his hat and scrambled up the bank again.

He had but little difficulty in lighting a fire at some distance. He tore off some brushwood, and took up old chips that had lain there since the ties were first put down, and placing them carefully on the hot coals they sprang into flame. From a dead piñon tree he brought limbs which were white and dry, and when the flame shot up he shrieked with a curious and interested delight. For he saw a pile of ties and some old bridge timbers which had been replaced by new ones. And now that he had a fire and the possibility of more, he saw that this one fire might not be enough. To be safe against any accident he must build another near the southern curve; for any express coming round there at forty miles an hour might not be able to pull up. He carried an armful of wood and a flaming torch four hundred yards to the south.

Now he felt active and alive, his mind awoke, his muscles tingled, he almost shouted with joy.

"Thank God," he said. And what he thanked heaven for was his awakening. He laughed—yes, he laughed like a boy. There was a good flame down at the bridge, and the little flame he had carried so far was alive and grew like a tended flower.

"But it must be bigger," George cried. And he ran to and fro carrying logs that his flesh would have fainted at but that his spirit was a brave one when the real need came.

He was black to look at and on his face the grime was streaked with sweat. His soft hands bled, and splinters were deep in his palms and fingers. But in his eyes was a strange light. Oh! but was it not good to do something that was useful. And then suddenly he wondered if it was. Suppose it didn't matter? Perhaps there would be no more trains that night and in the morning the section men would come and his work would have been wasted. He stood paralyzed at the thought, and just for a moment the blood left his face. It returned the next moment and he lifted his hand.

Had he not heard the scream of a locomotive?

"Yes!" he cried. And then he cried "No!" And going down on his knees he listened for the vibration of the rails. But he heard none.

But that was the sound of the locomotive shrieking? Yes, surely, and from the south. He snatched a big pine torch from his last fire and ran headlong down the line, as though he could stop the train with his hand. He felt so strong.

And as he came to the long stretch to the south he saw the glare of the locomotive's head-light. He wondered how a man could see anything through it. He forgot just then that the engineer was behind it. And he saw how swiftly it came and he wondered if the engineer was looking. Great God! if he didn't look, what would happen? What indeed? So he ran and ran and waved his torch. And presently the engineer spied a little spark on ahead of him, a feeble wavering spark, and he thought it might be a tramp's fire. And he cursed tramps as railroad men do, for they often burn up new ties and play old Harry with sheds and other truck, to say nothing of their infernal gall in beating their way on a man's very engine, squatting on the pilot, or hiding in the tool-box.

But presently that engineer, who for good reasons was the keenest man in the employ of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Road, saw that this wavering flame was a waving flame ; and beyond it was a bigger light. And then he saw a man who screamed in a high key and leapt aside as the train went past, and the engineer shut her off quick and clapped on the breaks, wondering all the time if that man had got out of the way, and, if not, who would collect him.

But he had been running on a big errand at a big speed, and behind him was no more than the president's car and the caboose. So the locomotive shot ahead and the sparks flew from the rails and she ran skidding ..ht over the last fire that George Harper had built in the middle of the track. And with the heavy dew on the rails a' i with the speed they had on her, the engineer only pulled her up just on the hither side of the burning bridge which was now well alight.

And as he stopped her the big man going north was out on the platform, with a white face, wondering what the devil was wrong, and whether his general managerial bigness would be taken into consideration by Fate, if anything serious was going to happen.

"Fire," said he, and he jumped to the ground, and with the conductor and the engineer ran to the bridge. "Can we do it?" he asked anxiously.

"I don't know, sir," said the engineer.

"We must," cried the manager, with a set face and between his big white teeth. "But where are the section men who built the fire?"

"I saw one, and only one," said the weather-beaten engineer, "and I ain't so durn sure that I didn't run him over, or, at the least, boost him fifty yards into the brush with the pilot."

But he turned to his fireman, a hard apprentice to a hard trade.

"Run back, Sam, past the first fire and look for him. What do you say, sir?"

"Why, certainly," said the manager. "But find him or not, we must get over, Jackson. We must. I must, if I go over alone. It's Denver or a wreck. You know it."

"If you say so, sir," replied the engineer; "but it's a big risk, and she may go through. If I'd come on to her as we were going we'd have shook blazes of another sort out of her by now. It's just a question if she'll bear a steady strain instead."

"Try," said the manager. For if the locomotive went through, the biggest combination in Western Rails went with it, and his trip to Chihuahua was for nothing.

And just then Sam the fireman brought up George Harper, packing him on his back. For though George had escaped by the skin of his teeth he was still almost stunned and stupid with the fall he got when he jumped to clear the locomotive.

The manager, big man and boss though he was, took hold of the tramp and the outcast.

"That's right. I'll look after him. Get her over, quick, and while there's time."

And after saying one word or so to his fireman, the engineer ran across the hot bridge, as a deer a man has fired at runs across a forest opening.

"I think she'll do it," he said, as he felt the bridge under him.

Then Sam jumped up and opened her out a little till the driving wheels revolved slowly, and she entered on the perilous passage of fire. Sam jumped down and left the train to itself.

The flames were now far beyond mere smouldering, and some of the timbers of the lower bents were quite destroyed. The fire

had hold of the very guts of the bridge—it was touch and go. Was there or was there not enough left to hold up the sixty-five tons of the locomotive? It depended on an infinity of conditions, and only an expert bridgeman standing down below could have given any opinion as to the result.

And as the train moved, the bridge cracked and cracked again. And here a bent bulged and there it crushed.

"We should have uncoupled the cars and let her come by herself," groaned the engineer. "And if the boss isn't in Denver in the morning, we shall get the Grand Bounce."

But by now the train was moving faster among the thick reek of smoke penetrated and interpenetrated by jets and sparks of clean flame that scorched the paint of the locomotive and the cars.

"Oh, my beauty, my beauty!" said the engineer.

But even as he groaned over her blisters and the destruction of her loveliness, the locomotive came up and was going past. He swung himself on to her, and looking back saw what a dreadful and strange infinity of time it took to pull the two cars off the burning and destroyed bridge.

Yet the next second he shut off steam and shouted in triumph as the angry flames hid him from those on the south of the bridge.

The others, helping George Harper, came down into the thorny bitter gulch and climbed out with difficulty; for he was heavy and broken, and half mad with strange excitement, which leaving him, left him overwrought.

As they got him on board the train, the life of the bridge was crushed and done, and it fell in with a crash.

"Let her go," said the manager. "Make up for lost time."

And in ten minutes the steam had its way and took hold, and they ran sixty miles an hour up north. They stayed at Rincon one spared minute to shout to the men there that the last big bridge was down, and then they rolled out for Santa Fé with a clear fire.

So George Harper was going north again at the rate of two days' hard tramp in one easy and dangerous hour.

"Boy," said the manager to the nigger who attended him, "fill up the bath with hot water, and lay out a shirt and some of my clothes. Quick!"

And the boy was quick. For the manager's

word was bigger than any law, and there was much to be picked up in his immediate service.

In the meantime Harper was sitting limply in a big reclining chair which worked on a pivot. He followed the motions of the manager and the boy with a disjointed attention and the stolid amazement characteristic of a nightmare. It was true, but it was too ridiculous to be true. And if it was not true, then what did all this gold and brass and glitter mean? He looked up and saw his burnt blackened face in many mirrors, framed with unmitigated barbaric luxury. Then he felt his bleeding scorched hands, and touched a blister in his cheek. What was he doing now? where was he going?

"I was bound south," he muttered rather stupidly, and the manager turned his big jovial face to him.

"If you want to go south, my son, you shall go when and how you like. You saved our lives that time. What are you?"

"A tramp, I suppose," said George, a little sullen at the peremptory tone in which the other spoke. His very sullenness was a sign of awakening.

"And you want to be one?" asked the manager quickly.

"No," said George.

"You need not be," said the manager. Going to a buffet he opened a bottle of champagne and filled a big tumbler.

"Drink," he said, and George drank. In half a minute he distinctly remembered that he had been a man.

The manager looked at him keenly. But in his rags and the grime of the fire and smoke it was difficult to understand this derelict.

"Have you a clean record?" asked the manager. "You never took what wasn't your own, eh? You're not a cashier?"

"No," said George. "I am only a fool."

"And perhaps not that," mused the manager. "Was it a woman?"

George nodded.

"They're not worth it, not worth it, my boy," cried the manager. "Never go to the devil for anything but power, young fellow. Only power is worth fighting for."

And then the bath was ready. George stumbled into the room and dropped his rags on the floor. Opening the window, he threw them into the night and stood naked. On his white flesh were long red lines where the thorns had scratched him. He was as thin

as a rail, but hard as wire. He lay in the bath and rolled over and wallowed like a porpoise, and when he came out his wounds were bleeding afresh. He dressed himself in the clothes laid out for him, though he winced as the shirt touched him. Yet when he saw his thin brown face looking over a white collar he could have shouted with joy. And yet he was most bitterly ashamed. He felt he could face the other man better in his old clothes. But then if it had not been for him his host might have been frying by now, and been very well done too. The thought gave him assurance. He went back bravely, and the manager slapped him on the back.

"I thought you were rather smarter than you looked just now," said he. "Come, dinner is ready. And I'm hungry. You did big business, sonny, when you built that fire. You bet you did."

And they sat down to everything that an American thinks good. George thought the meal heavenly, but then that was no wonder. Even the manager was so pleased with his luck and himself that he did not growl.

"I'm on a rich patch of luck," he said, "what with what I did down south, and your being on the spot, and the bridge holding

till we got over. I feel I could corral the universe."

He drank to George, to Fate, and all the big issues which hung on his being in Denver.

"Eat, eat," he said. "You like this? Ain't it better than hitting the road? Why not have it always? You can, you can."

George's eyes sparkled.

"Help me, and I will," he said. "Will you kindly pass the wine?"

"Are you a tramp now?" cried his host.

"No, by the Lord," cried George. "Help me. I helped you."

"You did," said the big man of the big western roads—"and yourself. They call me a hard case. You shan't find me so. I'll help you if you deserve it."

"Whether I deserve it or not," said George boldly. And the manager lay back and laughed. He ordered more champagne.

"You do, you do," he said. "Oh, but what a lovely combination would have been smashed if that bridge had let us in. And while I ride high, so shall you. Ah! This is Santa Fé."

And they rolled through the depôt.

"Did you ever eat bread and bacon out of

a prairie-dog hole?" asked George, laughing and lighting a big cigar.

And as they quickened her up again and flashed through to Denver the private secretary, who was to be, told the story of a dead tramp.

THE BOSS OF MYALL BLOCKS.

On thinking it over, I am inclined to believe that of all men I ever knew in New South Wales—or, for the matter of that, in Australia—the worst was Mat Gregory, the manager of the Myall Blocks station. Just as all the humorous yarns are attributed to Jacky Dow, late of Toganmain, so all the brutalities and insults are given to Gregory. That is to say, the honours are even between him and Tyson, who is really not so bad a sort as the sundowning fraternity are apt to make out.

But certainly Mat Gregory, or "Savage Ginger," as some called him, from his red hair and redder beard, was a bit of a beast, if he was a good manager. And as Simpson, who owned Myall Blocks, made at least thirty thousand out of that station alone in a good year, it was not without justice that he was esteemed a good man from the employers' and capitalists' point of view. But he knew sheep,

horses, and cattle a little better than he knew men, and consequently he had a bad name among those who worked for him. He could drive a man to death just as any fool can ride a horse to death, but he wanted the knack of getting men to lay themselves out for his service. There was no one who loved him or even liked him, and pride in the station itself was a non-existent quality. I knew this because I worked for him myself, and when I was boundary-riding on an out-station on the line of fence between us and the next station east I found it a little annoying to be pitied by the other boundary-rider whenever we met.

"How's old Ginger?" he used to ask, "and are you pickled by now?"

But, fortunately, I saw very little of him, and he left before I did. It happened this way, according to what I was told :—

Mat Gregory went up to the Northern Blocks, and stayed there savaging the superintendent for about three days, and making everyone wish he was dead. For, of course, nothing was right. He was the kind of boss who will go into matters with a storekeeper and, finding half an ounce of tea short, dock the responsible man. And if

it was half an ounce over he would slate him for robbing the hands. And yet he was a daylight robber himself, and nothing short of it.

However, at the end of three days he went off south again, and before he had ridden ten miles he came up with a little rough old chap, riding a beast of a broken-down crock not worth a pannikin of flour. His clothes had never been good, but now they were ragged and sun-burnt, and his very hat was full of holes. But Mat ranged up alongside him and said "Good-day" very civilly for him. He was, maybe, pleased with the jar he had given the North Block lot. Anyhow he slung the traveller "Good-day," and made as if he would pal in with him for the length of one of the big paddocks.

"Day to you," said the traveller, who was a strong, wiry old boy, with grizzled eyebrows that hung over his eyes like Robinson Crusoe's hairy umbrella.

"Are you travelling down to Myall Blocks?" asked Mat.

"I am so," answered the old man; "and further."

"It's a fine station, this?" said Mat.

"Not so bad," answered the traveller.

"Do you know how many sheep run on it?"

"Two hundred thousand and two hundred and five, by the last count," said Mat, feeling quite good and proud of the job.

"What? No more?" asked the old man.

"And how many more do you want?" asked Mat, quite surprised and not a little snake-headed. "Ain't that enough for a rusty old sundowner that never owned more of a sheep than a lump of mutton—and mebbe stolen at that?" said Mat.

"Be civil," said the old man. "How many sheep do you own yourself, or are you a boundary-rider?"

And Mat's horse gave a mighty jump, for Mat dug the spurs into him in his rage. And before Ginger could pull him up he was a hundred yards away. But he turned and came back.

"You rusty old whaler," he roared. "So I'm to be civil to y am I? A boundary-rider, indeed! I'm the manager of this run. I'm Matthew Gregory, that's known from Adelaide to Sydney, and from Melbourne to Brisbane—"

"You might be rich by the way you chin

about yourself," said the old boy, with a sneer. "So you're only a manager."

"And what are you?" asked Mat, foaming with rage. "You might be old Jim Gleeson, I should think. Only you ain't."

For Jim Gleeson was the richest man between Wilcannia and the Bogan, and a deal further than that.

"I might be," said the traveller. "But suppose I'm only a poor man travelling on the road, and asking nothing of you, not even your company?"

"Yes; I'll suppose that," said Mat, pretending to be civil. "But perhaps you'd like a job?"

"I don't want any job."

"No; that's what I thought," said Mat. "You're one of the sort that don't want work. You're looking for it, and praying not to find it. But if you come loafing round Myall I'll set the dogs on you. So mind!"

And Mat galloped off in a fury. He found a wire broken near the second fence from the home station, and, riding in, he sacked the boundary-rider who was responsible. And he made the Chinaman cook pray for dinner-time to be well over.

Just about sundown the old chap with

whom he had had the barney came riding past. So Mat went out and shouted over to the storekeeper—

"Don't you give that old ruffian any flour. And, Jack"—this was to a rousabout cutting firewood—"you go up to the cook and tell him not to give the scrapings of a frying-pan to him."

But the old chap stopped Jack as he was going up to the men's hut.

"Nice boss that of yours!"

"Ain't he just?" said Jack.

"Do you like him?"

"Do we like hell?" asked Jack angrily. But he did what he was told all the same. And then, to get even with Ginger, he stole the best part of a leg of mutton and grabbed half a hat-full of tea, and went out with it. He dodged round the back of the stables and came on the old boy riding along easy.

"I say," said Jack; and the other pulled up.

"What is it?"

"I shook this tucker from the cook," said Jack. "And three miles down the road, on the left beyond the little box clump down the fence, there's good water and a good bite of grass."

"You're a fine young fellow, you are," said the old man. "It's a pity you are not a manager. Would you like a better job?"

"Rather," said Jack; "but good jobs are scarce."

"Not so scarce for good men," nodded the traveller. "Will you be here a fortnight? I'm coming back, maybe, and might hear of something."

"I shall be here," said the boy; "that is, if I don't get shot out."

"You stay," grunted the old man. And he ambled off.

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Two days afterwards the junior partner of Davies, Davies, and Curwin, of Melbourne, whose name was Gray, went into his senior partner's room with a long telegram.

"This is a queer start," he said.

"What?"

"A telegram from Mr. Gleeson," said Gray.

"Read it."

And Gray read it out—

"Hunt up Simpson, of North Myall, and see if the station is in the market. If it is, close without delay and send the agreement to sell, etc., up to me at once. If not for sale offer him anything at all in reason. Don't

stop at ten thousand pounds above the market price. And find out if there is any agreement between him and his manager.—JAMES GLEESON, Hay."

"He must be crazy," said Gray.

"Did you ever know him do anything which hadn't money in it?" asked Davies. "He's got something up his sleeve. You had better find Simpson yourself. He's sure to be at the club."

And Gray went off. He did not come back till four. But he was triumphant, for he had struck Simpson at the ripe time, and North Myall was Jim Gleeson's. They wired the news to Hay.

. . . . . .

"You can get me a two-horse buggy to go up to North Myall in the morning," said a ragged old man, sitting in the bar of the Colonial at Hay. "And let it be a good turn-out," he chuckled amiably.

And next morning he started, while half Hay showed up to do honour to a millionaire who was not a bad kind of fellow anyhow.

On the fourth day, and after a long and interminable drive through the grey plains dotted very sparsedly with dwarf box and boree, he came to the south gate of North Myall.

"Mine," he said, as he clambered back into the seat. "Now, if I were a bloodthirsty sort of a galoot, I would like Mr. Gregory to come along and find me killing one of my own sheep. It would do him good."

He went through a long plain of a paddock, ten miles square, and he met a man on horseback at the next gate.

"Which way are you travelling?" asked the cheerful old man.

"South," said the man. "I've just got the sack from Myall. That swine of a Gregory ought to be killed. Now, in the States—"

"Do you want a job?" asked the man in the buggy. "For if you do, I hire you."

"Where?"

"Not far, my son," said he. "You follow."

And five miles further he met Jack, the boy who had given him a meal, coming along humping his swag. The old chap pulled up.

"I thought I told you to wait a week or two before you left."

"I got the sack," said Jack, grinning. "That bully of a Gregory—"

"Never mind Gregory," said his friend; "sling your blankets in behind and jump up and drive me. I hire you."

And Jack climbed in.

"He's on a large and imperial sacking scheme, is he?" asked Gleeson. "Well, maybe we'll be even with him yet."

"Where is your station, sir?" asked Jack.

"Not far, not very far," cried the old man. "No, bless you, not very far. I own a deal. I own a deal."

And so they came up to Myall. Almost the first man they met was Gregory, who had just come in with his black horse foaming. He saw the boundary-rider first.

"What are you doing here?" he shouted. "You got the sack and your cheque. Off with you."

"You go to blazes!" said the man. And before Gregory caught his breath he saw Jack, and then his eyes lighted on the face of the ragged, sardonic old chap who had told him to be civil. But now the old man looked different.

"You ——," said Gregory; but before he could get any further Gleeson nudged Jack, who whipped up the horses and drove them at a gallop right down to the house. And Gleeson got out to find Gregory running after him. But Gleeson was on the steps first.

"I own this station, Mr. Gregory," he said. "I bought it last Wednesday. Make up your accounts and get your horse. I discharge you."

"You're mad," shouted Ginger, who had suddenly turned pallid. "Who are you?"

"I'm Jim Gleeson, that's who I am," said the old man. "And for once I'm very glad to be a millionaire. There's not much pleasure in it, but if I never get any other pleasure from it than this, it's worth it. Put up the horses, Jack, and come here again to look through Mr. Gregory's accounts. I can't read." For he knew how to savage a man himself, when he wanted to. And turning to the boundary-rider, he said:

"Just see that things go on as usual, my man. The new manager will be here to-morrow. And the next one shall be Jack, if he's any good."

But that last sentence was to himself.

Such a man as Simon Gardiner, who held more land than any other squatter on the Murrumbidgee, is often fairly popular. For he was civil to all whom he fancied might help or hinder him, and servile in an off-hand kind of way to such as could do both. His servility said bluffly, "Now, with any other man I should be on equal terms, but I frankly acknowledge that it is a different matter with you." So the men who had more sheep in the present, or possessed greater credit as the beautiful result of sheep in the past, were inclined to think Gardiner a good sort, even if his grandfather had come out to New South Wales in a ship with soldiers. For that is the satiric colonial euphemism for a convict.

But, all the same, he was a beast, and as mean as mud to those who were down, who couldn't get up, or who were obviously of no use to him.

He had no traveller's hut on his station, and travellers, that is men looking for a job, fared badly at his hands.

"Save this bag of weevilly flour for swagsmen," he said to his storekeeper. "Let them cook it at night and think it's seed-cake."

That was his humour.

He always paid the lowest wages, and often screwed a week's work out of a man down on his luck for ten shillings and bad tucker.

That was his economy.

He starved out a free selector, and then bought the man up at a ridiculous price, when the poor devil had been drowning his troubles at a bush grog-shanty.

This he called generosity.

So the men did not love him, and, when they left his employment, often said so in the frankest, freest, and most delightfully adjectival manner. Every time he sacked a hand the bush reeked with long-suppressed opinions, which were obviously earnest and probably true.

But this Gardiner could never understand. He continued to believe in his own comparative goodness, perhaps by dint of imagining how much worse he could be if he dared. He said he held strong political views,

and any form of meanness looks better than it poses as stemming the flood of democratic progress. To give sufficient sugar in a pannikin of good tea was to pander to the multitude. They wanted too much.

But then Gardiner had not enough, and meant having a good deal more.

His great grief was that his station boundaries did not include the land occupied by Jimmy Morgan, who was in many ways Simon Gardiner's absolute antithesis. They mixed like oil and vinegar, only in this case the vinegar was on the top. Yet nothing, not even financial stress, could induce Morgan to part with his place, not even an entirely inadequate price, which Gardiner swore was ruinously generous when he offered it.

And just then the Great Flood happened, which solved the problem in its own way.

At Grong Grong and thereabouts—that is, let us say, from fifty miles south of the Murrumbidgee to fifty miles north of it—the country is as flat as a flapjack. It is true there are a few pieces of rising ground known to the innocents born in the locality as hills. If a station happens to be reasonably free of scrub and oak belts such may be easily discerned at a mile and a half; indeed,

anything noticeable at a further distance would be called a range, and be looked on as a notable obstacle to intercourse. And yet over all this country there must be a tilt somewhere, for the river really does run south-west. But not when a flood comes. Then the slope of drainage is manifestly inadequate. The water rises incredibly until there is a deluge.

When Morgan first took up his land it had just been surveyed. When the black fellows were asked how high the waters ever rose, those simple and dirty children of nature declared with *naïveté* that it sometimes got half-way up the riverside trees. The surveyors laughed, and told them plainly, in idiomatic English, that they lied. As an Australian aboriginal has no fine objection to mere good-natured abuse, the tribe merely shook their foul heads and departed, curiously wondering what the white fools were doing with a long chain and painted sticks. But ten years later came a convincing rain, sufficient to wash an unwilling black fellow and make it not unpleasant to stand on the lee side of him.

"There will be a flood—a bit of a flood," said Simon Gardiner, chuckling. "And if

there's any spot where's it's likely to run deep, it will be at Morgan's."

He rubbed his hard and bony hands in keen anticipation. For—"If he's flooded out, and his old gunyah tumbled down about his ears, and his wife and kids washed out, he'll be glad to sell," said Simon. "And I'll buy at my own price."

But Morgan never thought about a flood. He was just delighted with the rain. His wife and the girls were glad too, for they knew what a narrow shave it had been with them in the past hot summer.

"The oaks pretty near came to an end, didn't they, Nellie?" said Edith, the younger of the two, "and then we should have been out of it, and the jumbucks would have died."

For at the end of the summer Morgan only kept his sheep alive by felling trees for them to browse on.

So they gladly put up with ceaseless rain and muck inside and out, and when the inside of their house got mildew they bore with it for the grass outside, and one good year at the very least, and probably two or three. That meant Melbourne for a long visit, and new dresses and gay times. In

spite of living in the bush, they were just getting to feel that new frocks meant a good deal to them ; for there were many young men about, entirely ineligible and very interesting, who found Grong Grong a short cut whichever way their business led them.

But they did not reckon on the flood—neither, we are told, did Noah's neighbours ; and Simon Gardiner looked on himself as a wiser Noah. He was quite ready to take his neighbours in, yet he was taken unawares in spite of his foresight.

The ancient quiet Murrumbidgee was now running a banker and still rising. It carried down many horses, cattle, and sheep, that it had picked up on the way, and they drifted huggermugger with unnumbered trifles from a thousand miles of deep-cut banks. Logs from some low-lying huts went to swell the sordid trash ; and perhaps if one could have sorted out all the corpses that went down the red drift some human bodies might have been found among them ; for men will get drunk and lie round careless of the River Serpent which lifts his head in a dark night and crawls glittering on the flat and sucks them down. And if Gardiner could have had his way he would have presented the River

Snake with Morgan's body most cheerfully, or his wife and daughters' too, if need be.

And now the sky was for ever dark and low and heavy; it rained unceasingly, and with an awe-inspiring most perpetual steadiness. The few aboriginals, preserved by the belated care of a government on which they had been fathered, from poison and shot, hugged their kangaroo robes and retreated carefully to higher ground. But before they cleared out, a Mirrool black fellow came to Morgan.

"Missa Morgan," said he, standing bare-shanked in mud, "you mucha budgeree to poor black fellow. Bimeby allasame as creek evlywhere. You sendee jumbucks to Arria, and bimeby you give King Moses some bacca."

But Morgan gave him at once a pound of twist, strong enough to make a dead man cough, for the half-intelligible tip, and sent the sheep off after him. They got over Mirrool Creek just in time, and reached Arria's rocky hill after going through miles of water a foot deep. They were even then hardly beyond the jurisdiction of the river, and soon every yellow creek yielded its identity in the turbid universal deluge.

Gardiner, in his pleading anticipations of the flood's work, had made one error at least, and Destiny, if it was hard on Morgan, was harder on him. When the flood was a foot deep at Grong Grong it was two feet deep at the other station, and the waters drowned ten thousand sheep of Gardiner's the very day they spoke clearly as to what the distant hills meant and the rains of the hills portended. Who could believe these things in that bare, brown land of almost perpetual drought, where rain was seldom that did more than give the grasses' roots a chance to perpetuate their difficult lineage? Yet day by day half-drowned men brought in the news of heavier floods in the east and an unceasing downpour. The night the sheep were drowned it rose three feet on the level. The Murray joined hands with the Murrumbidgee, and the Murrumbidgee acknowledged its kinship with the roaring Lachlan, and the triple flood mowed a heavy swathe in a submerged land.

The same midnight that Morgan hitched up his scared team to escape out of the plain, old Gardiner desperately harnessed his, and they went toward the dry land that was left; but as Morgan drove through the glimmering waste with his wife and children there was

ringing in his ears something out of his childhood's days in England when he sat and listened to the clergyman—

"And he said, Go up and say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."

So he drove furiously in his mind, but had to let the horses go slow; for the water was to their knees and they trembled and were afraid.

His wife sat beside him, and the two girls behind them clung to each other fearfully. Don, the best beloved of their dogs, crouched under the seat. The other dog was at Arria. But Don whined pitifully. To him this universe of pale dark water was something even more incredible than it was to the others. They had heard of strange and awful floods, but for him, pupped in a drought and trained in a thirsty land of dust, it was a nightmare that made him tremble. Yet the poor girls encouraged him and warmed his cold paws in shaking hands.

"I am afraid we shall never get through, Mary," said Morgan in a low voice to his wife. She clutched his left arm.

"Don't despair, Jim."

"We get deeper now," he said after a few

minutes as they entered a dark bull-oak forest. "But we must go deeper yet."

The water lapped about their feet, and the horses lifted their heads ; and Don sprang up between the girls as though the water had bitten him, and left him no courage.

"It's deeper than I reckoned on," said Morgan ; "and I believe it rises every minute. We must go for the Pine scrub. It's our only chance."

For where a thin patch of pine grew was the highest land about them. But it was a mile's drive, and the waters rose and rose.

In that strange and awful midnight, everything seemed unreal and ghastly. There were odd and pitiful cries from the sunk bush. In the dark glimmer of the moving water they sometimes saw a white patch that marked a dead floating sheep ; once they heard the roar of a terrified bull and the low of a swimming cow. They knew that the snakes were swimming too, and the girls created out of their minds innumerable serpents gliding like eels for the buggy as a refuge. A lizard that had taken shelter under the seat made Nellie scream. Then Don barked and gave a mournful howl which echoed dully in the moving bush.

And now the horses almost swam. They snorted and stopped. Morgan urged them, and at last, with a plunge that nearly upset the buggy, they went in, and the water rose a foot. Then it gradually grew shallower, and the pines showed above the water. They had just entered the patch of scrub when the near-side horse neighed loudly.

"What did he do that for?" asked Nellie; and the answer was given by an answering neigh from the far side of the pines, among which were a few loftier box-trees.

"Is there anyone else here?" said Mrs. Morgan, who hoped for succour where none could be.

"It looks like it," answered Morgan; "for, if the other horse was loose, he would most likely come to ours."

"Cooey!" said his wife; and Morgan cooeyed. His cry was returned from near at hand, and they heard other horses splashing within a hundred yards.

"Who is it?" shouted Morgan.

"Simon Gardiner," replied a quavering voice; and Nellie made a mouth. "Who are you?"

"Morgan and the whole family," answered Morgan with a cheerfulness which surprised

himself; for the presence of another human being inspirited him, even if it was Gardiner. "What do you think of it?"

"I don't know what to think," said Gardiner; "but if it rises much we shall all be drowned."

He had to speak loudly to be heard, and he found it difficult to make his voice sound as bad-tempered as he felt, for it is not easy to shout sulkily.

"This is the only chance," said Morgan. "Are you by yourself?"

It appeared that Gardiner was. His men had taken themselves off on his horses, which he denied them permission to do, as soon as things began to look really serious, even leaving him to harness his own buggy. He meant to make it warm for them when the waters went down and they came in for their cheques. They would get none, and if they went to court, he could fight them while he had a pound of wool left to raise money on.

He told the Morgans so in a high querulous voice. But they were thinking of other things. For the water still rose.

"Kitty," said M[illegible], "this is the highest ground I know of for miles round. If it rises more, we shall have to take to the

tree here. I'm going to get out and cut the horses adrift and give them a chance. Any moment they might take fright and upset us."

He opened his knife and slipped quietly into the water, which reached his chest. What he could not loose he cut. He noticed with apprehension that as soon as they were free they moved off to the northwards and were soon swimming. It was as if they knew they could not stay there long. Yet they would have to swim five miles at least for much higher ground. Morgan called to Gardiner—

"You'd better let your horses go."

And Gardiner, seeing the necessity, loosed them, though he swore horribly at having to get into the water. When his pair were free they followed Morgan's, and two black hours slowly passed.

As the night began to wane hope grew once more in the hearts of all. It seemed impossible that such a flood could last. They could have prayed with Ajax to be destroyed in the light. But when the dim dawn broke there was no mitigation in the remorseless downpour. And the flood still crept up inch by inch, when every visible increase seemed a new and worse disaster.

An hour after dawn the buggy was no longer possible, and Morgan, crouching against the near tree, made Nellie climb upon his shoulders, and get to the lowest big branch. She was followed by her sister, and with great labour Mrs. Morgan took her place by them. Morgan tried his best, but was unable to raise himself. Though strong, he was a heavy man of his years. But if he could not climb the waters could.

"Don't trouble about me," he said. "If it rises much more I can swim to an easier tree. I wonder how Gardiner is doing."

But Gardiner had had a bit of better luck than they. He was on a spot at least two feet higher. His buggy, too, was bigger. But when he was sitting down the water reached his waist.

Even as he sat there in the lukewarm turbid flood which moved sluggishly about him, though he knew that his flat world was under water, he still ached for the possession of Naboth's vineyard. Not even the terror which walks by night nor the ghosts that moved upon the face of the flood could scare the greediness out of him.

And, besides, he said, it was a chance—a good chance. Though the waters receded

Morgan's house would be ruined, his flocks destroyed. He might sell now. At the thought Gardiner rose. He drank out of a bottle and called to Morgan.

"Morgan," he said, "how goes it?"

"It rises still," answered Morgan, who was standing on the buggy seat with his back against the tree on which his wretched family sat.

"Will it ever go down?"

Morgan did not answer and Gardiner drank again.

"Will you sell out now, Morgan?" he cried.

Morgan looked across to him in surprise. Who was this, ready to huxter in the face of death?

"No," he said.

But Gardiner persisted.

"Take my last offer," he cried again.

Morgan shook his head.

"This is no time to buy and sell. We may be dead before the morning."

Gardiner laughed, and sat down, but rose again choking. The water was over his lips. He looked at the tree under which he stood. But he was sixty years of age, and he knew that ten feet of smooth trunk would beat him,

if, indeed, the flood could rise so far as to make him try it. He stood on the seat and cursed the warm treacherous liquid covered with dead leaves and pine-needles. It made no noise, and did what it had to do very quietly. The only sound was the sound of the Great Rain, though every now and then a stick loosed out of mud rose like a fish leaping for a fly. Yet he heard Morgan's dog howl.

For Don was standing on the seat with his fore-paws against the tree. He looked pleadingly at the girls above him.

"Couldn't we lift poor Don up, papa?" asked Nellie. But Morgan shook his head.

"Before this is over you may have enough to do to hold on, my child," he answered. And then Don had a fit; he fell back, and went under and kicked dreadfully. The girls screamed, and covered their eyes. But presently Don recovered and regained his old position. He suffered terribly, and several times seemed like to die.

And so they passed the whole silent day—the sombre, black-skied day. They could not talk, and only once did Gardiner speak. His voice sounded very odd and thick to the Morgans.

"Won't you sell out now?" he cried; and he laughed terribly. They heard him chuckling when the night fell once more.

By midnight the women had been twenty-four hours in the tree. They had eaten nothing, and had drunk the flood-water out of Morgan's hat. Presently Mrs. Morgan moaned and fainted. But her husband could do nothing. He had nothing to give her, and he might not even take her in his arms. Then he heard old Gardiner talking to himself or to the River and the Flood.

"Gardiner!" he called.

"Ha! you'll sell now, will you?" cried Gardiner.

"Have you any brandy, Gardiner? My wife is ill."

Simon laughed.

"More than a bottle," he cried.

"Thank God!" cried Morgan; and kicking off his boots and hanging his coat on a knot in his tree, he swam out through the darkness. He came at last to the buggy, and was trying to climb to the seat, when Gardiner shouted angrily to him,—

"Keep off!" he cried; "don't you come close!"

And Morgan laid hold of a pine sapling.

He could see the old man's head and shoulders out of the water.

"Will you sell out now, Morgan?" said Gardiner.

"No," said Morgan.

"Then go back to your perch," answered Gardiner, supping brandy.

"I'll give you ten pounds for it," said Morgan.

And Gardiner jeered him till Morgan loosed his hold of the pine and swam towards him.

"Keep off!" cried the old man thickly, "or I'll brain you and break the bottle at the same time!"

So Morgan swam back again to the sapling and heard Gardiner still pulling at the bottle. What could he do to get the brandy from a drunken old man doomed surely by his own folly? How could he circumvent him? At last he loosed his sapling and swam towards his own tree. But when he was half-way he turned quietly to the right and, swimming right round a thick piece of scrub, came up behind Gardiner, paddling very softly. If he could but swim in close enough to grip hold of him before he was himself seen! And just as he was within four yards Gardiner turned.

He threw the empty bottle, which was floating by him, very viciously at Morgan. But the swimmer ducked, and the missile struck the water harmlessly.

"You would, would you?" said Gardiner. "I thought as much."

But Morgan was about done for.

"Give me the brandy, and I'll sell out," he cried.

"I'll not trust you."

"For God's sake, Gardiner," said Morgan, "give me the brandy and come down to Grong Grong when the flood's done, and name your price."

"Swear on your honour," said Gardiner, "and then I'll trust you."

And Morgan swore.

"And if you go back on it," said Gardiner, "I'll track and hunt you out of the country if it cost me my last pound. And I'll never let up on you till I'm dead."

So Morgan got the brandy.

"Bring back a little," said Gardiner, quite cheerfully.

But Morgan did not answer, and swam on. If he had had the breath to spare he would have laughed.

When he reached the tree he found his

wife half conscious and moaning. He gave the bottle to Nellie, and cursed himself that he could not reach them.

And presently Gardiner cried in a loud voice, "Remember, you've sold out, Morgan."

A little while after he spoke again.

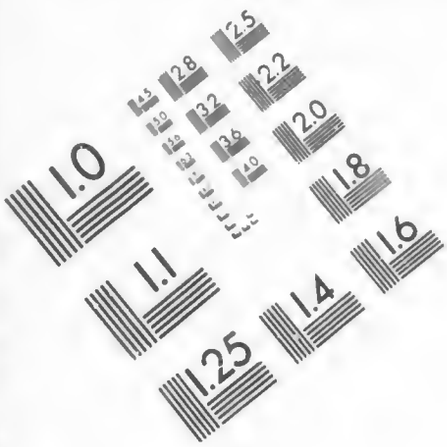
"Give me the brandy, Morgan; I'm cold, and the water's over my heart."

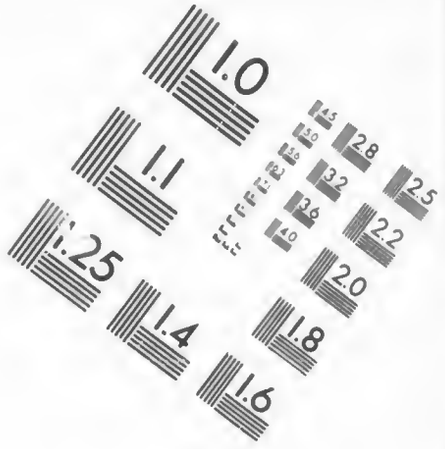
But Morgan laughed and gave him no answer. He heard the old man crying at intervals, and the terrified girls asked him what it meant; for in such a night to hear that cold, deathly voice was horrible, most horrible.

But Morgan only said the man was drunk. Who could help him in any way?

"The waters are to my chin, Morgan," he cried again; "they are to my chin! Help! help!"

They were at Morgan's lips, and had not a log floated near him he would have had to swim. He called to Nellie, who held out her hand. Her father sprang from the sunken buggy seat, and, scrambling on the log, laid hold of his child's wrist and a branch. He was soon sitting in the cramped tree-fork with his wife's head upon his breast. And Gardiner cried, —





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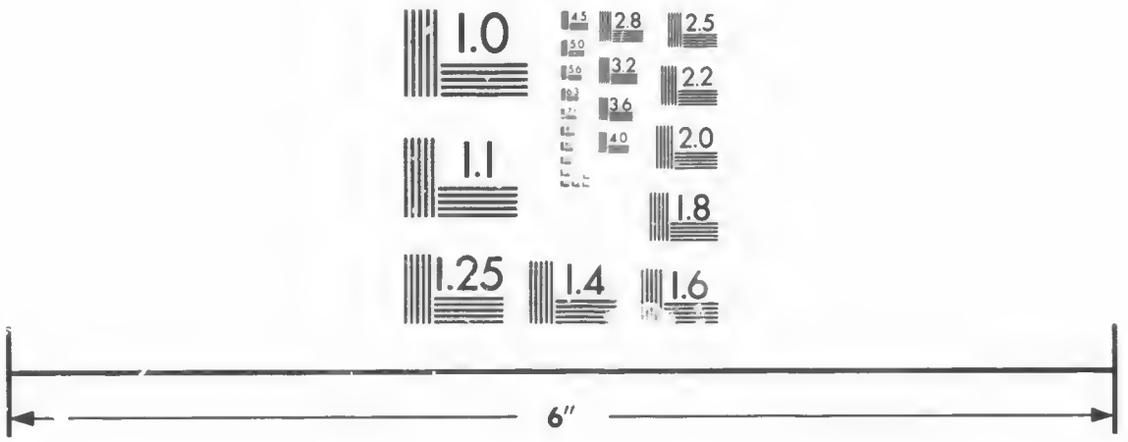

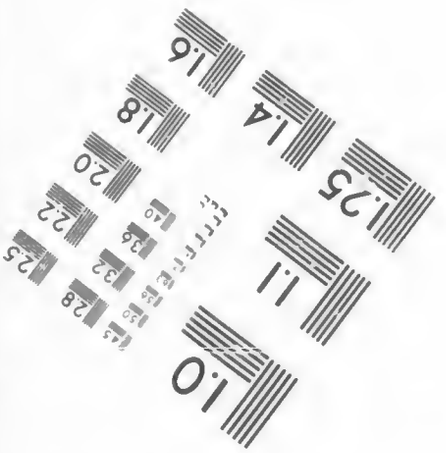

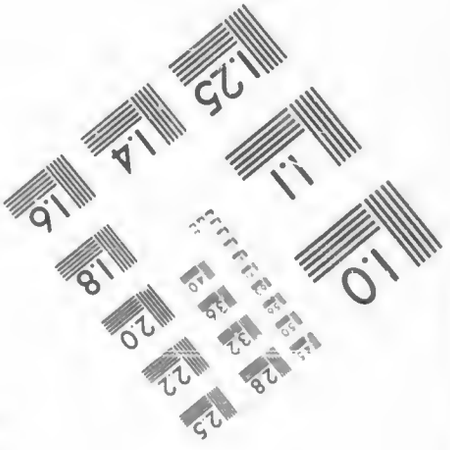

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"They are to my lips—to my lips."

But Morgan did not answer. For the horror of it came over him, and he could see the old man choke.

Once more he cried in a very lamentable voice for help. Then he laughed a harsh, crackling laugh, and spoke for the last time.

"I've sold out," was all he said.

And then the River took him, and floating him out over the land which he had so yearned for, rolled him in the mud, to let him taste its very savour. He went down the slow current which led towards Morgan's homestead, with the bodies of dead sheep which had once been his own. And now the waters stayed, for they had come to their most ancient marks, and were slowly subsiding. The rain ceased upon the plain as it had ceased before upon the hills, and the day broke very wonderful in a golden dawn.

"VERY well, I'll do it for you," said Gurdon. "I'd just as soon you should have it as Parsons, for he is always kicking about prices."

"All right, then," said Fredericks in a preoccupied way; "let me see it as soon as you have it done, or you might send in part."

And as he turned to his desk Gurdon nodded, showing a half-burnt cigar between his big teeth, and went out to his club in the purlieus of St. James's. He chuckled joyfully as he went.

"Landed my fish rather neatly that time," he said, as he stayed at a corner and struck a match on a much-scratched brick. "I might have had more trouble in placing it. But now I must do it. Six weeks' hard labour, and, I suppose, one hundred pounds. That was the implied price."

He went into the club familiarly known as the Paste and Scissors Arms ; and ordering a large gin-and-bitters, sat down to consider matters and methods. But presently Rivers came in. He was the very antithesis of Gurdon, who bulked large and red and fiery, and could look murderous after three drinks ; for Rivers was thin and dark and small, and deliberate with the choicest Oxford deliberation, and by no means given to any form of violence. It was reported that he understood the Alps, and a rumour once gained considerable credence that after a late supper in his room he undertook to demonstrate the glissade by toboganning in a tea-tray down the stairs. But this may have been invention, for Rivers denied it consistently, and he might well have forgotten what none of his guests were in any state to remember.

"Is there anything new, Gurdon?" asked Rivers, as he sat down.

"Tea-trays are at a discount," said Gurdon gravely, "but embrocations are firm."

Rivers smiled wearily.

"That is not new, Gurdon. Have you done any work lately?"

"I never work," said Gurdon. "Work, as I take it, is a reasonable and regular appli-

cation of one's energies to definite ends, and I only go in for unreasonable and irregular bursts of chaotic mental activity. Now, I understand you work. I often hear you say you are going to do so. Believing that you speak the truth, I respect your industry, and mourn my own incapacity for continued exertion."

"You are cheerful this morning," said Rivers, "and keep up your pose. But what do you do when you disappear for three months at a time?"

"I consider the lilies," said Gurdon gravely, "until I am in immediate danger of starvation. Then I work for a week fifteen hours a day and smoke fifteen cigars and some pipes, and drink a bucket of tea and a bottle of whisky. And I come back to town with fifty thousand words of miscellaneous matter, which I dispose of during the next three months. I have no nerves left, and am a perfect wreck, an empty bottle, a stove-in cask, a dried-up spring, the shadow of my full self. I am amorphous, blotched, bleared, gibbous, *gastado*, wasted. Then I come and look at you, and sit here and grow again. I am nearly ready now—"

"I see the energy coming up in you," said

Rivers. "But you are a full-sized idiot to work like that."

"Every man to his method," cried Gurdon, touching the bell. "Have a gin-and-bitters, Rivers?"

They drank together, and Gurdon expanded: his red beard glowed.

"I'm going to do a good month's work for Fredericks," said he.

"Mind what you're doing," said Rivers.

"What do you mean?"

"Stamp his letters."

"It's a verbal agreement."

"Then you'll quarrel, and he'll do you."

Gurdon looked ugly.

"I'll bash his brains out if he tries. But he won't. It is too clear for him to get out of it."

"What are you doing for him?" asked Rivers.

"Seven long articles on Seven Popular Asses," said Gurdon indiscreetly. "But I have liberty to serve them as if I were an intoxicated humorist of a costermonger knocking his donkey in the Old Kent Road. He will edit the libellous matter with a big blue pencil."

"Give it them," said Rivers. "I wish I was in a position to be one of them."

"So do I," said Gurdon softly, as a gentle prospect of *n* per cent. on *x*" copies opened out to him. "For I would sling journalism —yea, and all writing—and go out into the unsophisticated universe and be a man. I must have another drink."

"With me," said Rivers.

He ordered it, and Gurdon continued.

"What luck a man has! I should have made a most sweet pirate—an amiable and intelligent filibuster. And here I am leading forlorn hopes against the Seven Champions of Bourgeoisdom. Good-bye. I am off."

He departed swiftly, and for a long month was not seen of men.

But in five weeks a gaunt wreck swung into the Harbour of Refuge, and went ashore heavily in a big arm-chair.

"Bring me a gin-and-bitters," said the wreck. "And have you seen Mr. Rivers to-day?"

"He's usually in to lunch, sir," replied the waiter.

Sure enough Rivers came in at half-past one. "The devil!" said he, when he caught sight of Gurdon, "so you're back. Glad to see you! Have you smitten the seven asses?"

Gurdon groaned.

"I've done it, man, finished last night. And to think of all the rot I've read in order to get through. I've been at it seven to ten hours a day for a month. I stayed at a little inn down at Shoreham, but I don't think I wandered further than the bar. Yes, I once went to the stables with a drunken visitor to inspect a horse. I've had a deuce of a time."

"So I should think," said Rivers seriously, "and doesn't it ever occur to you that it's suicide to go on like that?"

Gurdon grunted.

"What's the odds? Now I've to badger Fredericks. It's a new form of hard labour."

"Let me hear how you get on," said Rivers. "I'm curious to know if he pays up."

"He'll pay," said Gurdon. "I shall write every other day till he does."

But he wrote every other day for a week, and then every day for another week before a cheque came.

That night Rivers met Gurdon coming west down the Strand like a fire-ship in a tideway He loomed gigantic, and his ragged red beard looked like flame; women stared at him and laughed half nervously when he

had passed, but men got out of his way, and nothing less than a City policeman, used to regulating traffic, would have stopped him. His eyes glittered, and he was cursing in a thick dry whisper. He saw Rivers, and halting, laid his big paw on his shoulder and swept him off down the street.

"What the devil's gone wrong?" asked Rivers calmly.

"He sent me fifty pounds," said Gurdon in a voice that would have split a fog like a gunshot. "Now what I want is advice, my boy—nice cool, wise advice, with an iceberg of due deliberation in it. Shall I catch him and sweep the Strand with him, or shall I wreck his office and set it on fire, or shall I wring his neck and plead public benefit, or what shall I do?"

Rivers gave him a slight sheer which sent him out of the Strand into King William Street, and they drifted past Toole's Theatre like a big blundering barge and little river tug.

"You will do none of these things, Gurdon," he said quietly. "I should recommend your calmly pointing out to him that he has only sent half, and then, if he doesn't cash up, sue him."

"Sue him?" roared Gurdon. "Can I catch his sweet breath of a month ago and pay the penalty and stick a sixpenny stamp on it? If he's a mean hound, why he is, and verbal agreements without witnesses don't count for much. He would set up custom and common rates, and I should get County Court justice, and have to pay costs. No, no; I'll catch him, and knock the stuffing out of him."

"He's as big and strong as you are," said Rivers, "and you might get the worst of it, and go to jail too."

Gurdon stopped.

"I tell you, Rivers, I could lick a churchful of such, I could; you bet I could."

And letting out suddenly, he hit a shop shutter such a crack with his huge fist that the street resounded.

"Don't," said Rivers. "Come up to my rooms and we'll talk it over."

And about two o'clock in the morning he put an intoxicated but mollified giant into a stray hansom, and sent him home.

But Gurdon did no other work than write letters to Fredericks. He kept up a continual bombardment of them till the editor grew sick and angry. He wanted to punch his

contributor's head just as much as the contributor desired to punch his. But public opinion on one side and Rivers on the other kept them both from an open scandal.

"What am I to do with this fellow?" he asked his chief clerk in despair. The clerk might have suggested "Pay him," but did not. He was quite accustomed to Fredericks' getting something for nothing or much for a little. So, at last, he thought of arbitration.

"If he sues me, he's certain not to get a full verdict, but he'll be nasty," said Fredericks, "and, besides, the advertisement would be worth the money to him. If I get Hayden, or Siblock, or Grayson to arbitrate, they'll see how absurd the price is. They wouldn't get more themselves than what I sent him."

So he wrote and suggested that as the matter in dispute was so small, arbitration would be a good way to settle it. Gurdon pondered over the letter, and took Rivers' advice again.

"Take him on," said Rivers; "you're sure to land something."

Gurdon brought his fist down on the table.

"If I didn't believe I should get the full amount, I wouldn't arbitrate!" he roared.

"He's a swindler, a ruffian, a mean, sneaking, crawling, beastly journalistic parasite."

"If you think that way you shouldn't arbitrate," suggested Rivers. But Gurdon was torrential, blind, blundering, and would not listen. He wrote and asked who was to act as arbitrator.

Fredericks suggested Grayson, a very popular man of letters, who, having come into considerable money, rarely did any work.

"He's the very man," said Rivers when he heard of it.

"But I don't know him," growled Gurdon; "and he's such a general favourite, I know I sha'n't like him. And if I don't like him, and he goes against me, I shall carry on most shamefully."

Rivers rebuked him.

"Of all the absurd, impossible creatures I ever saw, Gurdon," he said severely, "you are the most absurd and impossible."

So he calmed Gurdon down, and got him to accept Grayson as arbitrator. And that night Gurdon spent ten pounds of the full fifty which he was to get, as he firmly believed. And Fredericks gambled away the

best part of the fifty which he believed he had saved. His losses made him smart, and he lost his temper and swore in the card-room. A man who was no friend of his threatened to report him to the committee, and this set Fredericks on a regular tear. He was as much given to that kind of thing as Gurdon, and he was to the full as reckless a fool. It was good luck they did not meet that night, or there would have been flaring head-lines for the evening papers the next day.

In the afternoon Grayson came to see Gurdon at his chambers, and the journalist found him very pleasant and genial, and quite as clever as his reputation would have led him to suppose. He listened to Gurdon's wild denunciations of his editor, and to his theory of the agreement.

"I'm sorry I undertook this, Mr. Gurdon," said Grayson gloomily, "it looks as if I had to believe that either you or Fredericks must be a liar."

Gurdon intimated cheerfully that he hadn't the least objection to his thinking as badly as he liked of Fredericks. But that did not quite settle it.

"I don't see that I can take either your account or his into consideration," said Gray-

son. "If I fix a price, it must be on the general grounds of fair journalistic prices for such signed work."

So Gurdon grunted and they shook hands, and Grayson went to inspect the seven articles on the Seven Asses.

He reported to Fredericks that he considered a fair price would be another twenty-five pounds—making in all seventy-five. He sent a note to this effect to Gurdon as well, and washed his hands of the matter with a resolution never to act as arbitrator again.

He pleased neither; indeed, both were furious.

For this call of another twenty-five pounds struck Fredericks in a tender spot. His account was overdrawn, and his magazine was moribund, or, at the least, very sadly ailing. Worry of all kinds had driven him half crazy, and now his overcharged nerves went off in an explosion.

As for Gurdon, who was relying on that fatal fifty pounds to pay his rent and his club subscription, he fairly tore his hair and beard. But all his wrath was now directed against the unfortunate arbitrator.

"He evidently thought I was the liar," he

said, "for how could any man not see that my tale was the only credible one."

He went out and started drinking at a terrible rate. And when he drank fast he never became obviously intoxicated. His appearance was that of a madman. It was a pity that Rivers wasn't at hand with his nice deliberate manner and his carefully enunciated common wisdom to drop a little cold water into this bubbling, boiling pot. But Rivers was at work. If he had guessed what was happening, he would have left a chapter unfinished and have come down to look after this gunpowder barge once more adrift in the fairway. However, he knew nothing, and he could not stop or order differently the course of coming events.

By eleven o'clock that night Fredericks, too, had drunk sufficient champagne and mixed liquors to lose what was left of his discretion, never at any time over much.

"Confound Grayson!" he swore to himself. "I wonder if he has told Gurdon? Isn't there anything which I forgot, anything I ought to have let him know? I'll go and see the cursed fool! I wish I had never let it go to arbitration!"

He stood in the hall of the club pondering. The porter came up to him.

"Was it you ordered a hansom, sir?"

That decided Fredericks.

"Yes," he declared, and getting in, he drove off to Grayson's rooms.

The night was fine and brilliant, the streets crowded. But there was just that touch of cold in it which catches a man who has not been over-careful in his dinner and after-dinner drinks. He entered the cab passably sober, and came out intoxicated. He quarrelled with the cabman; he returned abuse with abuse, and finally offered to fight the man.

"You're three stone over my weight," said the driver, "and I should get hauled up and lose my license. You're no gentleman, that's what you ain't."

And Fredericks went up the stairs in a towering rage. He put it all down to Grayson, and cursed him in the common language understanded of the people. He found the arbitrator's oak unsported, and he knocked loudly and knocked again. Then he listened, and was answered with a snore. He turned the handle and went in, to find the room in utter darkness.

"Grayson, is that you?" he said. Advancing a step, he tripped up, and in an instant was locked in a strong embrace.

"Let go," he shouted; and the next moment he was loosed, and got a crack which half stunned him. His self-restraint was gone. He went for his opponent, whose figure he now saw dimly by the gas-light outside the opened door, and pounded for all he was worth. He never gave Grayson so much credit for being a fighter. "I'll murder you!" he muttered. "You immortal idiot, I'll arbitrate you!"

And grappling with him, they reeled over the room, capsizing chairs and table, and generally reducing the whole place to a perfect wreck. But suddenly they fell across the sofa, and he got such a blow on the side of his head that he lost consciousness.

The room was still dark when he came to, and he found himself lying on top of his opponent, whose breathing he could scarcely discern. He was now a bit sobered.

"By Jove! I hope I haven't killed him," he said; and getting clear of the sofa he took a match from his pocket and lighted the gas. As he turned round he saw Grayson in front of him, looking perfectly thunderstruck. The arbitrator was so neat and in such good trim that Fredericks for a moment thought that it was all a dream.

"I thought I'd killed you," said he.

"What have you been doing to the room?" said the arbitrator.

"What did you strike me for?" said Fredericks, plucking up a bit.

"You're mad," said Grayson. "What do you mean?"

"Fredericks shrugged his shoulders.

"I've been punching you for this last ten minutes," he muttered.

"Confound you!" said the arbitrator angrily; "you have smashed a hundred pounds worth of china and furniture. You're drunk, sir. This comes of doing something to oblige you. Get out of this."

And poor Fredericks, who was still stupid with the blow which made him insensible, obeyed like a child. Grayson saw him off, and sported his oak. Coming back, he looked ruefully at the mischief which had been done, and tried to arbitrate on that. He cursed a little, and went into his bed-room; but he heard a noise behind him and came back. Gurdon was standing in the middle of the room looking absolutely ghastly, with blood running down his face from a cut in his head.

"What the blazes are you in my rooms for?" said Grayson, who began to believe he was dreaming.

"What did you strike me for and kick me?" said Gurdon in a confused and foolish voice. "I was quiet enough till you did that. I only just wanted to speak to you. I thought I had killed you."

Grayson sat down and whistled.

"When did you come here?"

"I don't know," said Gurdon plaintively.

"How did you get in?"

"I knocked and came in and sat down to wait a bit for you. And then you struck me."

Grayson laughed scornfully.

"No, I didn't; it was Fredericks, and a pretty mess you've made of him," said he. "He won't be able to show up for a month."

Gurdon wiped his face with a handkerchief and looked happier.

"Then I'm all right," said he. "I was afraid it was you. And I'm afraid we've hurt your furniture. I'm very sorry, Grayson."

"Who's going to pay for this?" said Grayson. "My place is wrecked."

"You will have to settle it with me and that beast Fredericks," suggested Gurdon dolefully, who began to see that a cheque for twenty-five pounds would look very small against so much damage.

But Grayson smiled, and rising, unlocked his door in a very suggestive way.

"What!" said he, "settle anything with money in it between you and Fredericks? Not very much. Good-night, Mr. Gurdon."

AT WALDO.

It was growing more than a trifle cold at Waldo, for on the other side of the mountains, on the eastern side, the snow was thick and heavy. Even the Siskyous were white down to the Rogue River that ran out of their glaciers, and when the wind blew to the sea the miners at Sailors' Diggings blew on their fingers and cursed hotly. It was a chilly time, and the Oregon Saloon at Waldo was doing a good business in bad spirits.

One Saturday night the place was full, and Billy Grew, the bar-tender, was sliding brandy and gin on the metal counter like a conjuror. Every now and again he concocted something complicated.

"Here, doctor," said Jake Hopkins, "just fix me up suthin' that'll make a man of me. Put in what you like, and as much as you like, if it's ten dollars' worth, in a jug."

And the "doctor" behind the bar slung

his soul and artistic sense into the matter at hand. He made Hopkins cough and slap his chest.

"What d'ye call that?" he asked admiringly.

"It's a 'Billy Grew,'" said the inventor modestly, "and the basis of it is gin."

Hopkins recommended it to the others.

"Boys, a pint of it on a graveyard would spoil the resurrection as a whole world show; it would soothe the melancholy of a government mule. Take some and be happy like me."

The crowd drank "Billy Grew" and grew merry. They forgot their miseries and remembered their troubles no more.

And then a mild-mannered, whiskerless, beardless man entered the saloon. He had a modest sober air that Hopkins didn't like; it was a reproach, it was unsuitable to the atmosphere, it was wrong; it should be altered. The stranger stepped up to the bar and stood among the noisy crowd, pondering his order. Hopkins shoved up alongside him.

"Partner, if you've got any horse sense you'll ask for a 'Billy Grew' right here and now."

The stranger looked at him gently.

"And what's that?" he asked.

"It's a drink, my young and innocent friend, a drink that'll bring hair out on your upper lip and make you feel just good, that'll make you as strong and warm as a ten-ton hammer at work. Ain't it cold outside? Then you take it and be warm inside."

The new-comer shook his head.

"Thank you very much, partner," he said in a strongish voice, "but I reckon I'll take a warm lemonade."

There was a moment's silence, and then a shout of laughter. But Hopkins did not see the funny side of it.

"A warm lemonade!" he roared contemptuously. "Who the hell ever heard of a warm lemonade? Here, doctor, hand me the jug. This stranger will take some straight; about half a pint will suit him."

"But I'd very much rather not," said the meek man. "I'm only taking soft stuff."

"Hell!" said Jake, and he poured out a tumbler of gin. "Now, you just drink this and I'll give you a toast. 'Here at yer, dad drat yer; here's to you and towards you; if I'd never a' seen yer I'd never a' known yer.' Drink, drink, my teetotal chicken, or suthin's goin' to happen."

And he shook his left fist within an ace of his man's nose. The next moment the gin went flying, and Jake dropped as if he had been shot. The stranger had struck him under the left ear.

In a moment there was the devil's own row. No knives or pistols came out, but three of Hopkins's partners came for the man who had put their biggest champion on the floor.

In thirty seconds they were all in a pile, with Jake uppermost ; and the stranger turned to Billy Grew.

"If, as I was going to say when I was interrupted, you'd fix me up a warm lemonade, I'd feel mighty obliged," he remarked quietly. And the bar-tender, though it almost broke his heart, did the unprofessional act, putting a little hot water in the lemonade.

"And you won't have just a little something in it?" he asked.

"Thanks, but I'd much rather not," said the stranger.

And gradually the men on the floor picked themselves up. They attended to Hopkins and presently he came to.

"What was it struck me, boys?" he murmured as they propped him against the wall.

"Only a cyclone," said Jimmy Gordon; "nothin' more serious."

And the stranger turned.

"If you'd drink with me, boys, it's I that would be real pleased to see you step up and name it."

They stepped up to the bar, and Hopkins again stood alongside the cyclone.

"Do you have any objection, partner, to my feeling of your arm, and then I'll liquor."

He was allowed to feel the mild man's biceps. It was nothing out of the way, and Jake's face fell.

"I don't quite take it in," he said, "but I'll drink with you. And I'll have—yes, by Gosh—I'll have a warm lemonade."

"And we'll all have a warm lemonade," said the others, softly.

They drank the unaccustomed liquor with wry faces, but peace reigned once more in the saloon, even if the wind howled outside, and the prospect of earning more money for better drinks was cold in the extreme.

LIKE A MAN.

We were sitting in the saloon at Glen Ellen, Sonoma County, California, and as it was November we were glad to get to the stove. Most of us steamed; for the whole valley was in a mist with rain, and the creeks ran roaring.

"A good day for still-hunting," said Josiah, who was deeply engaged with a chew of tobacco.

"If there was anything to hunt," growled an oldish man, whom none of us knew. "There's nothin' but a few measly deer of sorts round about this country nowadays. Nary a Californian lion, nor a grizzly. One has to go far for any kind of real game."

And he put such an emphasis on "real," that those of us who sometimes shot a deer fairly squirmed. We knew we were in the presence of a Nimrod.

He was a stout-looking man, with greyish hair and beard; but for all his hinted disgust with Central Californian hunting of the present time, there was a curious twinkle in

his eyes that showed humour. And noting that, I chipped in,—

"If you're an old-timer, maybe you saw some'hing real in the way of sport, eh?"

He nodded.

"And if it was warm, and I warn't soaked and dodrotted miser'ble right to the skin, I could spin you fellers yarns about them days as would make you open them eyes of yourn."

"Tom," said Josiah to the bar-tender, who was wiping the steam from the window with the flat of his hand, "bring this gentleman something. Come, sir, what will you take?"

The hunting gentleman accepted some old rye. And it sank into his memory, bringing the colours out strong, and his imagination revived as the whisky got into him.

"You don't mind, none of you, when bears was as thick in Sonoma County as grapes is now. A man couldn't walk a mile without running butt agin a black bear at the very least; and the squeal of a young pig at night fetched the grizzlies out o' the hills like flies for meat. And my favourite game then was potting the black bears up the pines. They'd jest climb up a two-hundred-feet tree, and think no more of it than you and me'd of

goin' upstairs to bed. And it was the best kind of fun to shoot bears as one would shoot a bird. Lordy, but how you would admire to see a six-hundred-pound bear rear up and over, and come down kerflummix with a whack that knocked all the stuffing out of him! And the way he clawed the air was something surprising. I've killed 'em flying; for at that time I was a daisy with any sort of a gun. I mind just chipping the paw of one, and he got so savage that he missed his tip, and down he come like a case broke out of the slings. I put three bullets into him before he touched the ground. He fell three hundred feet or nigh. When he hit the rocks down below he was dead."

And the old man drank.

"Tom," said I, "I think this gentleman will drink again; and as it shows signs of clearing up, I'll have one with him."

We drank solemnly, and Tom came over and took a chair by the stove. The old man rambled on.

"But that warn't more'n an amusement. It was no-ways dangerous. Bless you, it takes all the fight plum out of the grittiest bear to fall so far. But I mind one time I had a time of it that war risky, if you like. I was

workin'—minin', you know—at the Silver Star Mine, and one Sunday I clawed my gun and went out to kill. When luck's agin a man, he must drink or slay. There's nothin' makes a man quiet in a bad streak like whisky or blood or a good scrap when he gets licked —well licked, you know. So I went out with a bloody mind, and steered right ahead into the lonest kind of place I could hit on. I didn't take no notice where I was goin', but I got into the bush and lost myself—fair lost myself. And the chaparall was as thick as the bristles of a brush, and all locked together, and bimeby I struck right on the tracks of a bear I knowed. You bet I knew the foot of every big bear round about, and this one had come nosin' round our shack time out of mind. His paw was as big as an elephant's; it covered a piece of country as big as any Chicago foot could do. It was long and broad, and the claws of him was claws like old Scratch's, and they sunk into the ground as if he was planting peas in a row, making holes with a stick. And I was that wild agin my week's luck that I never steadied myself to consider, but I crawled after him. And the chaparall got so thick, that it took a bear like him to get through—it would have stuck a loco-

motive—and in a bit I had to work here and there to find an easy way. And presently I went down on all fours, and then on my flat, pulling my gun along. And still it grew thicker, and just as I was makin' up my mind to stay there like a trapped fox, I see jest a bit of light ahead; and giving one tremenjus heave, I got my head into the open. But another inch, fore or back, I couldn't stir. No, not for all hell."

And he drank again. We waited patiently as the rain beat against the windows. He turned towards Josiah—

"No, there warn't no movin'; and what d'ye think I see?"

"The bear, mebbe," said Josiah eagerly.

"Right the first time," answered the hunter. "And he was as big as a barn, and when he see me he rared up on his hind legs, and let off a kind of chest thunder that sounded like a far-off snow-slide in the mountains. And I—"

"Yes, yes," said Josiah; "and what did you do?"

The old man reached for his glass, emptied it, put it down slowly, and turned suddenly and savagely on the crowd.

"Do! do! What the blazes could I do? I just died like a man."

THE ARROW-MAKER.

After the crisis of the red battle, when the Asts, beaten on the high thorn ridge, had given way and run headlong in panic, their conquerors, the Usts, gathered in the long bloody eastern slope and screamed their howling chant of victory.

They were fierce and hairy, lightly fur-clad, long-armed and prognathous, small-eyed and small-headed, but their muscles were like iron. As their ancestors had done, they stooped. When their young cubs played gibbering on the moraine of the great high glacier, they ran at times on all fours, swift as animals, as young wolves. But now the savage mothers and their offspring were camped in the high pine forest, expectant of the news—and of food.

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!" sounded the chant, and, closed in a wavering circle, the warriors beat club against club and waved their bows

above their heads. Their arrows were spent, their bark and skin quivers were empty, and they sang hideously of the slain, and of mutilations, and the flesh of their enemies, and the coming night's orgie, the reward of victory. For these were the ancestors of men, and men themselves capable of bravery, being all brave and brutal, capable of forethought, for they were fighters, capable even then of much that should hereafter grow to something beautiful, capable of all save mercy, which was not yet born of the womb of Time.

When the monotonous and oddly intervalled chant was done, and the day was dying and the sun was aflame over the specks in the far distance that marked the running Asts, the Usts separated and spread exulting upon the battle-field, which was thick with dying and dead. But the dying were not many; the fighting had been close and fierce and hand to hand. In a few bloody moments there were no dying, no, not even of the Usts themselves. For the living even yet saw not only the sun red, but the sky as still tinged with blood; there was the colour of battle in their twinkling deep-set eyes. Even the white snow overhead seemed bloody, so they slew

even their own. And then they mutilated the dead Asts hideously, and played fantastic tricks that made some chuckle grossly. For they were now men, not animals, and this was a place for invention that marked them from the simpler beasts. Some they spitted and some they hung head down from the wind-bowed trees, and some they rent in pieces. But first they drew out the arrows. For these were still good. Were they not the choice carved work of their great artist and lame warrior The Dog, who earned his right to live by aiding them to slay men and the mammoth? They were good arrows, and they drew them out.

But when they came to their own dead, which they left uncarved and unmarked, the young warrior who first drew out an arrow exclaimed loudly, and they gathered about him. It was a most beautiful arrow, not rough like The Dog's, but almost smooth; at the point polished and very keen and fitted to the shaft with a cunning hollow. They had seen none like to it before.

"The maker of the Asts' arrows is greater than The Dog," said the warriors, and they quarrelled about possessing them. Two were slain ere the dispute was settled.

When the red sun was gone, they started heavily laden for their camp. The dew was heavy at the verge of the pines. In the dank and heavy thick-brushed forest it dropped like pattering rain. Above, where barren rocks jutted out, it congealed in silver, shining against the clear-cut crescent moon. But as the night deepened, the moon dipped and the mountains grew sharper, whiter and blacker still. A stray drift of cloud chilled over the silent peak, falling in snow; the rocks gleamed suddenly. The thin moon went out; and its light of faint silver ran up to the highest peak. It seemed to leap higher yet, but that was only a star risen above it, shining in the lucid serene of heaven.

As they went, the Usts chanted, and the glad women heard and came to meet them to take the dead burdens. Then they were close to their camp and red fire in the hidden hill hollow. They yelled as they came down the trodden slope and called for the old Dog, who came out limping. He was older than any there, for forty summers had reddened his nose and his patch of bare cheek, forty winters had grizzled his coat and thatch of matted hair. But he had been a great

warrior and was strong even yet. Before a running mammoth, prickly with arrows and spears, huge and aghast at its human enemies, had trodden on his leg, he was the swiftest of his tribe, the wisest and most cunning. He had wrought at his new trade, fearing the end, glad that there was much flesh in the camp by the dead mammoth; but he had done well. And now they taunted him.

"Behold," said they, "the arrow-maker of the Asts is greater than The Dog."

He took an arrow and sitting down by the fire, pondered savagely over it. It was beautiful, better than his own, much better, so much finer that he hated the Asts' arrow-maker more than the whole tribe of Asts. It seemed so bitter a thing. He was greatly troubled by it and his brain grew bloody of thought. The envy of the artist pricked him.

"There shall be no arrow-maker among them," he said, and he gave the warrior ten arrow-heads for that one. He sat down again and ate with the others, but ate less than they, for he was angry, and when they were still lying in a heap snoring like pigs on a summer morning in a fat land, the old lame devil was afoot. He took a club, his bow and

arrows and the Ast's arrow, and a lump of burnt flesh. He travelled towards the land of the setting sun, the way the Asts had fled; he marked blood once or twice and then he came to a dead enemy. On him he found two fine arrows. With them he carved the dead man's face and went limping onwards.

His lameness made the long path so long that only at the second day did he come where he reckoned his enemy among his enemies would be. Then he found they had moved further west, and he followed their tracks cautiously, cursing as he went.

On the third day, at nightfall, he saw a red eye of flame stare at him through the brush. He lay hidden till the grey dawn dimmed it, and then crawled out through the frosted grass to look about him. The day before his meal was done and he was very hungry. But by broad day he had almost circled the camp, marking at the last a likely place for the maker of arrows to come for flints. He made a little grass nest in a neighbouring thicket and waited patiently like a very cunning wild beast. But the pains of famine struck him through, and each time he dozed and dreamed he saw a dead arrow-maker and a red tongue of fire licking the flesh.

At noon when the sun was warm he saw one of the Asts' children come his way. This was almost as good as if the arrow-maker had come ; in some ways, he grunted hungrily, a good deal better. Soon after he felt stronger, though he had no fire, and he was ready to wait even the waning of the moon as he lay hidden and crouching.

On the third day of his long waiting he saw a tall young Ast come ambling towards the little flinty hill, and The Dog's heart beat fiercely as the slaver gathered on his thin lips. Was this the arrow-maker? It could not be so young a man, he thought. But in a little while his little eyes glittered and his corded muscles ridged themselves heavily, for this Ast was chipping flint on the hillock, working dexterously. The Dog watched and learnt something.

As he stayed and waited, he doubted whether he should slay this Ast with his own arrow or not. At last he plucked out the sharpest and smoothest of the three, and in a moment it was buried in the Ast's heart. The young maker grunted and fell over, biting the gravel, breaking his sharp teeth on a flint. Then The Dog drove an arrow of his own make through his rival. He desired to

chant victory, but he only crawled out alert and watchful.

When he came to the arrow-maker he was quite dead, so The Dog only stamped on him, and lipped his blood. Then he cut his mark on the low forehead—three lines like an arrow—and he drew the weapons out of his rival artist's heart. His own had pierced him through and through.

"It was quite good enough," said The Dog.

IN A WINDJAMMER.

THE *Acapulco*, a clipper-built barque of 1560 tons register, was homeward bound, and a good bit to the nor'ard of the Horn. The season was coming well on to spring in those latitudes, that is to say, it was September, and the *Acapulco* had come booming with squared yards between Cape Horn and the Diego Ramirez Islands. But no sooner was she headed for the north-east than the weather changed, and ripped out into an unexpected north-easterly snorter, with heavy rain accompanying it. And with the rain came a little sharp sleet to sting up the men and make them growl. Yet for all that, as the barque lay over on the port tack, she meant getting home, and swashed through it at a good ten knots an hour, taking in heavy seas every now and again, some of which came through the scuttle of the foc'sle head and dripped upon the salty crowd below.

"Ain't she just a bloomin' hog," said Jack Husband, as he prepared to change his soaking toggery for the third time that day; "she don't know when she's had enough."

"There's more than the old *Acapulco* like that," grunted Jim Graves, who was for ever digging his knife into someone, though he favoured more especially the man who had just spoken. "When some of us gets the pavement under our 'oofs, it'll be mighty chancy walking. And all for not knowing what's enough."

"You boil your head," retorted Jack, "get into a sack, do, and dump your ugly carcass over the rail. You've as much jaw as a sheep's head, and you ain't worth so much, no, not by the price of it."

And just then, as luck would have it, to spoil an interesting conversation with good promise of a row in it, the mate sang out, "Starboard main-brace," and the word was passed forward to the foc'sle where the men were taking shelter from the rain. The watch streamed out on deck in gleaming oilskins and trimmed the yards. But it was mostly "a dry pull," for they hardly gained an inch. And dry pulls sharpen up the men's tempers, if they do nothing else.

Just after supper, in the second dog-watch, Graves and Husband got at it again. For the supper had been a feed bad enough to sicken a pariah dog, because the galley had been swept clear in the afternoon by a heavy sea. Everyone was savage, but these two were the champion grumblers of the ship. They were antidotes to each other in a measure, and acted as safety valves. "Did you ever see or taste or smell such 'ogwash of coffee?" asked Graves. "What kind of a ship is this, any'ow?"

"It's like a penitentiary, ain't it," shoved in Husband, seeing his chance. "But mebbe you'd like cocoa better."

And Graves growled angrily, for he had been jugged in San Francisco the voyage before for assaulting the police.

"It warn't the Penitentiary; it was the 'Ouse of Correction," he muttered.

"Ah, you see, *I* didn't know the difference," was his enemy's retort. "There's some men as ought to stay at home and be fed pap with a spoon. The Sailors' Home is about as near the sea as *some* men ought to get."

"It's better than Jackson's Boarding 'Ouse, you can bet on that," said Graves.

And then the whole watch argued soberly

the whole subject of Homes *versus* Boarding Houses, until two bells.

But then another row began.

"What's that you say about mugs in Well Street Sailors' 'Ome?" asked Graves, bristling up.

"I said as I didn't want to drink out of mugs like a kid," answered Jack Husband.

"They don't use no mugs there," said Graves, "they use cups."

And Husband sneered.

"Gah'n. I tell you it's mugs, and more'n that, they sleep you in boxes up an iron cage. And a pretty kind of a doss-house. It's most like a gaol as *I* knows of."

But that did not touch Graves at all. He was far too keen about the mugs to mind the implied insult.

They went off into the argument like two rival bulls in one paddock, and appealing for supporters, each got so many that mere weight of opinion could not settle the point. Then they applied the deductive method.

"It ain't likely as they'd give mugs to men, now is it?" asked Graves, defiantly. "They give 'em to kids. Now what I want to know is, would they give 'em to sailormen? No, it ain't likely. Why, men would smash 'em. I

would, you bet." But Husband met this argument by violating his own prejudices.

"I ain't got no bloomin' objection to mugs *as* mugs," said he. "It's only as I think they believes 'em cheaper."

"What?" asked Graves, "you don't mind, *you?* You're a liar, that's what you are."

"I ain't no liar, and don't you call me so," cried Husband.

And then Graves fell into the fallacy of particular induction, by declaring because he himself objected to mugs all men must.

"But," said Husband, "you might as well say that because you don't mind going to gaol, all men don't mind."

This roused Graves to such a pitch of fury that nothing could soothe him but being allowed to tell the whole entire story of the fight which led to his temporary seclusion in the House of Correction in San Francisco.

"And I did object to being jugged, and it warn't me as started the bloomin' row in Sacramento Street," said he, irrelevantly. "And if I did object to bein' in, why, your bloomin' hargument ain't worth shucks, and you're a liar, that's what you are, as I said before."

And he added some remarks which implied,

not wholly remotely, that Husband was something much worse than a son of a sea-cook, and the descendant of swine. The result of this was obvious, there was only one answer.

"Take that," said Husband, and he smote Graves upon the nose. They rose up and fought, and fell down and struggled, and some of the crowd said, "Part 'em," and some said, "Let 'em fight." And they were allowed to struggle till both got mauled, and nobody was best man.

When peace was at last restored, Husband went in for a long and rambling induction, and showed that in most Homes cups were known to be used. And that, therefore—but just then eight bells struck, and the bo'son piped, "Hands shorten sail."

For it was breezing up very heavily and even the reefed foresail was too much for the *Acapulco*.

THE GOLD MINE OF KERTCH BAR.

Two men were sitting on a wooden seat and staring out over the Humber. Their point of vantage is one well known at Hull, for there is a flagstaff there and many seats, and one can spy the whole river and New Holland at the other side, and the vessels and tugs going up and down on the swift tide betw[illegible] the Spurn and Goole.

Suddenly one of the men pointed with his finger at a vessel hanging in the stream.

"You see that barque, Bill?" he said.

"Well, and what of her, Ben?"

"Why this," said Ben solemnly—"But first where does she hail from?"

"I should say she's a Nova Scotian," said Bill. "It's hobvious."

Ben nodded.

"She was built at Halifax, and she's come to Hull, and it's my opinion she'll end in Hell. And from Hull, Hell, and Halifax good Lord deliver us!"

"And what for?" asked Bill.

"She's owned by a widow woman," said Ben earnestly, "wot never had no luck—not with her husband nor nothing. I knowed her out there, and she's always in black, and comes aboard, and it's agin the rights of things for her to do that same, and give the crew the hump with such a black send-off."

Bill snorted.

"You're as full of superstitious rot, Ben, as a cat. You believe in Lapland witches, and in Finns, and in Flying Dutchmen, and in every foolishness as ever got sailormen laughed at ashore."

"And why not—why not?" asked Ben gloomily. "I tell you I've seed the Flying Dutchman; and as to Finns, in my last ship, her as I skinned out of here, there was a Finn, and if he was sulky the wind was foul, and if he was pleased it was fair."

Bill, who was a cockney, cured in New York, gave a snort, and pulled a plug of black cavendish out of the breast-pocket of his monkey-jacket.

"Mebbe he wanted to get there, matey," he said. "Now suppose you was just dyin' for a chew, and I kind of offered you this yer plug; you'd smile, wouldn't you? And then,

if I said, 'No, you don't!' and planted it again in my pocket, you'd look mighty sick, wouldn't you?"

Ben turned and stared at him.

"What are you getting at, with all this foolishness about terbacker? What's that to do with Finns?"

"Why, this," said his mate. "What I'm saying, and if you'll just dry up and listen, you'll see, is this. That it wouldn't be your bloomin' smile or your sick looks as'd make me give it or not give it, but my giving it or not giving it as would make you look sick or not."

Ben shook his head at this laborious logic.

"Well, and what the blazes has all this rigmarole about a chew to do with Finns and wind?" he asked pityingly.

"Can't you see as how the Finn might, just as well as any hother man, look black with a contrary breeze, and pleased when it was fair?" Bill retorted.

But Ben shook his head again.

"It ain't no argument," he said, "for as I told you when he turned sulky, the wind changed. I could bring you ten men, not to speak of a cook, as would take their oath to it in any court of law. And I wasn't guffing,

anyhow, about Finns or any other kind of Dutchmen, nor of Dagos, but of a widder woman in black coming to see a ship out of dock."

Bill looked rather mollified as Ben did not insist on the Finns.

"Well, I'm with you there," he said; "but then women is bad luck anyway, black or white. I was yarnin' with a 'bus conductor the other day, and he says, 'What's coming to the women I don't know. They won't put their 'and to a thing the same as their mothers, and some thinks they can drive a 'bus.' That's what he said, and it stands to reason a 'bus conductor should know a lot about women. And this one is mighty popular, too."

Ben nodded.

"Women's all very well ashore, in their place," he said earnestly. "But even there what call have they to own ships? Does it seem natural for a woman to own ships? No, it doesn't, of course. Let a woman be the wife of a captain if she likes—"

"I knowed a captain's wife what did for him proper," said Bill. "He sailed before the mast afterwards, and many's the time I've heard him spin us a cuffer about it."

Ben reached out his hand and coolly extracted the plug of tobacco from Bill's coat, and having torn off a huge chunk with his teeth, returned it.

"And what was the yarn?" he asked, as his eyes followed the barque, which had started the talk, round the point below the town.

"Well," said Bill, "he was skipper of a cargo-boat wot sailed to the Baltic, and he owned up to him and the mates getting a good deal of stealage, one way or another. But the chief thing he and others hung on to for getting more than his pay, was what he called the gold mine of Kertch Bar—"

Ben shook his head.

"That won't do," he said, "for I know better than that. Kertch ain't in the Baltic."

"Where is it, then?" asked Bill defiantly.

"It's in the Black Sea or thereabouts," answered Ben vaguely.

"Black Sea or Baltic is all the same to me," said Bill, "as I've never sailed in neither, and never will, if I knows it. But I'm telling you. He called it the Kertch Bar Gold Mine, and 'ow they did 'ave the owners was just a treat. For you see it was just this way. If I don't know Kertch, why, I may be

wrong in small particulars; but the chief thing about it is its beastliness and its bar. And the way that bar shifted was a fair miracle. Trainer, that was his name, the name of this 'ere skipper. He said that, accordin' to what the owners thought of it, the bar walked from this side or that, and just plumped itself down in the fairway. And the pore harbour people, they was worked to death, so they said, with surveyin' 'ere and surveyin' there and shifting buoys. But it was no manner o' use, and out of three vessels as came in one was sure to get stuck, and then it was telegraphin' 'ome to say as she'd took the ground and must be lightened. And out comes lighters, and they works, and then tugs, and they pulls, and presently they 'eaves 'er off and fills her up again. Sometimes a skipper would be that unlucky as to get stuck twice running, and the owners picks out the vessels with the least draught. But that was no manner o' use, for as Trainer said, and laughed when 'e said it, the bar was that treacherous as to rise up in the night and shove a two-by-four scantling high and dry. And, as you may guess, this 'ere Kertch Bar got a bloomin' bad name; and if it hadn't been that they 'ad to go, the owners would

have seen Kertch further first. And some did, but the rest stuck there just the same.

"And Trainer told us one night how ten skippers was ashore drinking. 'e with 'em, and they got to talkin'.

" 'I dars'n't do it this trip,' says one. And a pilot as belonged to Kertch give him a liquor. And bimeby some men as owned the lighters came in, and then some o' the 'arbour authorities. The drink went off like hot cakes, and one took to daring the other.

" 'I dare if you dare,' says one.

" 'You'll blow the gaff,' says another. 'Don't kill the goose what lays the golden heggs.'

"But after a drink or two more the careful ones was guffin' about the times they had been caught by the bar.

" 'Seven times I done it,' says one. And a pilot wot talked good English he said the one as 'd done it most was the skipper of a Swansea boat, who'd been on nineteen times.

" 'And good biz, too,' yells out another. 'I know him. A good careful hofficer, so his owners say, but a bit unlucky at Kertch. And he's fair rotten with his money for a man of his sort.'

"And that night afore they'd done they

was ready for hanything. Next morning there was nine vessels 'ard and fast in the sand, and the telegraphs was working, and nine lots of howners was cussin' their luck, and the shippin' papers had lots to say about the wicked kind of hanchorage there was at Kertch. And all the bloomin' time it was the coolest kind of put-up job as you ever see.

"And that was the time as Trainer got left. And I'll tell you how it was. He had to take the money for that time and the time before, and he shoved it into a henvelope and sends it to his wife. It was full heighty pounds; if I don't misremember, it was heighty-two pound ten; and 'e didn't care about keeping it by 'im, for 'e was apt to go ashore and get blind, as is the way with 'em when no one's by. And fat and jolly and laughin' he gets on board and goes off with his height-knot iron box 'ome. But when he reached Hull—yes, this yer very port—he looks very sick. This was how it happened.

"Trainer's wife was a thin, worrying woman, and that narvous with his carryins on, and the wind blowin'—for all women, as you know, thinks it blows 'ard all the world hover at the same time—that she couldn't stand so much rhino in the 'ouse at once.

"She thought as burglars from all parts of the country would smell it and come down 'er little back street and crawl in and get it out of her mattress. So she takes it out o' there and sews it in her dress, and then she thinks she'll fall down in a fit and be robbed at a 'ospital, or that a fire would break out special and burn up the bloomin' neighbourhood. And at last, with sitting up awake all night watching her gown 'anging behind 'er locked door, she got that scared that she ups and hoffs down to the howner's office; and, going right up to the very 'ead boss, whom she runs agin in the alleyway, she allows as 'ow he's Mrs. Trainer.

"'And what do you want, Mrs. Trainer?' says 'e, perlite enough.

"Then she let's him 'ave it, and hinformation fair runs out of 'er. She tells him about the money as Trainer 'ad sent, and she arsked him to keep it for her.

"'Where did it come from?' says the howner.

"'From Kertch, sir—at least, I think so, but it's in the letter.'

"She 'ands it over just as she picked it out of her gown.

"'And 'ow much?' says he, laughing,

thinking, I guess, that a ten-pound note wouldn't make him nervous.

"'Heighty pound hodd,' says she. And never till harfterward did she remember 'ow 'e jumped.

"'Heighty pound! Why, that's a lot of money,' says he. And then, saying, 'Excuse me just one moment,' 'e goes out.

"He come back agin in five minutes, laughin', but still serious.

"'We'll take care of it for you, Mrs. Trainer,' says he, 'but I should 'ave thought as 'ow you'd have been used to gettin' money from your 'usband by this.'

"That was 'is trap, and the silly woman goes right into it like a sheep. And never knowed it till afterwards.

"Oh, yes, sir,' she says smiling, 'but not so much as this.'

"'Then how much does he usually send from Kertch?' asks he, laughing again.

"'Oh, never much more than fifteen or twenty,' says she. 'And that's enough to make a lone woman nervous of losing it.'

"'Yes,' said 'e, showing his teeth; 'it's not nice bein' robbed. But we'll see no one but the owner gets this,' says 'e. And then she goes out, thanking 'im profuse, and tells

all 'er neighbours wot a nice kind man 'e is.

"But I guess 'e 'ad gone out and 'ad a talk with another bloomin' nice kind man. And they just whacked it to her proper, and then went on to find hout 'ow it was that Trainer got so much rhino over his pay. For they knew that private trade wasn't nothing out there, and they didn't reckon Trainer had been speckylatin' in Kertch town lots.

"And Trainer, who was comin' 'ome, 'uggin 'imself about that lump of stealage, never thought so much as once of what a fool 'e 'ad been to send it to her, just sayin', 'Keep it till I get back.' Many a time I've 'eard 'im say he could go out and bang 'is nut on the steam winch or a bollard to think that six words more in his letter would have done it, and 'e'd still 'ave been gettin' gold out of Kertch. But them words was never wrote, and when he gets into Hull River, afore he docks the howner comes on board.

"'Bad luck again this time, captain?' says 'e, cheerful like.

"And Trainer touches 'is 'at.

"'Yes, sir, we was very hunfortunate again so far; but we got off without no damage, not a strain,' says he. 'And

it's I that would be glad never to see Kertch again.'

"Going into the cabin they sits down.

"'And is it so very bad?' asks the owner, innocent. 'And what is the reason of the bar shiftin' so?'

"'Hask me another, sir,' says Trainer, 'if you'll excuse me saying so, sir. But going in and out of Kertch it's guess work to the best of pilots. And what them pilots don't know ain't worth knowin'.'

"With that he winks to himself, and as he told us, 'e felt that clever 'e could 'ave split with laughin'.

"'It's a bloomin' nasty trade,' says the owner, kind of sighin'.

"'It is that,' says Trainer. And seeing the man so soft and sweet, it just catches 'old of him that 'e might get a rise of a couple of pounds a month.

"'It is that,' says he, sighin' too, 'a bloomin' nasty trade, sir. And very trying is the Black Sea at times. It's not like the Mediterranean, where a man can live cheap and well.'

"'Why no,' says 'e, careless. 'Then you don't find it a savin' trade any more than us?'

"'Saving!' says Trainer, kind of sorrowful. 'It takes all a man's pay to find 'im in clothes. I ain't saved two-pound-ten in a year.'

"And with that the bloomin' howner, a big, tall man, said Trainer, just rises off his seat and stares Trainer in the face like a judge.

"'Then, Mr. Trainer,' says 'e, in a voice like a lower topsail goin' out of the bolt ropes, ''Ow did you make that hextra heighty pounds as you sent to your wife?' says he.

"And with that Trainer says the stuffin' was clean knocked out of 'im, and he felt like a hempty sack with nothing in it. He just sat down.

"'What do you mean, sir?' says he.

"But the owner walked round to him.

"'I means that money you sent 'ome from Kertch,' says he; 'and afore you go ashore I means to 'ave the truth out of you.'

"He pulls Trainer's own letter out of 'is pocket, which the wife had give 'im with the posh, and spread it out before him.

"'Hexplain,' says he, very stern.

"And at that Trainer give right in, though afterwards he grinds 'is teeth at not thinkin' of a good tale. He could 'ave said it was a

legacy from a dead haunt or huncle, or 'ave pitched somethin' to the man to shut 'im up. But 'e couldn't think, and could only cuss 'is wife, poor woman! 'E looks up at the howner standing there grinning.

"'The truth or the polis,' said 'e.

"'Ow did you get it?' asks Trainer. And 'e told him.

"'But the question is 'ow did *you* get it?' says the owner.

"'It was give me,' says Trainer, pluckin' up.

"'Who give it you?' says the owner.

"'The lighterage folks at Kerch,' says 'e kind of silly.

"'Oho!' says the howner, and 'e sits down by Trainer. 'Now, Mr. Trainer,' says 'e more kind, 'there may be nothin' in this, and I may be mistook; but if you don't make a clean breast of it all, I'll give you in charge; for that there's somethin' in this that I ought to know, that I'm sure, and know I will—yes, if I 'ave to go to Kertch and work it up myself.'

"'Do you mean it?' says Trainer foolish-like, and with that he give way and let it hout.

"'But first,' says 'e, 'you won't prosecute?

Because if you're goin' to do that I'll say nothing.'

"And the howner says, 'No, not if you'll tell the Bible truth.'

"'Well,' says 'e, and 'e says when 'e began 'e could 'ardly 'elp laughin', 'in the first place there ain't nothin' wrong with Kertch Bar.'

"'What do you mean?' says the howner.

"'I means just what I says,' answers Trainer, stubborn, 'there ain't nothin' wrong with the bar. As a bar it's all right, and no worse than other bars, and better a deal than some. It's a good steady bar—'

"'And don't shift?' asks the owner.

"'Not more than in reason,' says Trainer, 'and according to a gale or the time of year just like any hother bar.'

"'Then why did you get on it?' says the howner.

"'It was the pilots,' says Trainer, 'and the 'arbour folks, and hus. It was a put-up job, that's what it was. And what we paid the tugs and the lighters and the pilots they give us commission on it. And that's the gospel truth, sir.'

"And the howner chap was that surprised he reached up for a glass in the rack and took a drink of spirrits neat.

"Well, I'm 'anged!' says 'e, 'and for years we've bin payin' for double lighterage and for hextra towage and all sorts of bloomin' things. Who started this 'ere racket?"

"'It was started afore my time,' says Trainer, rather sulky again. 'When I got there it was in full swing. And if you give me away as 'aving told you, my life's not worth as much as a loose bit of brasswork in a Danube port. That's what it ain't. For they calls it the Kertch Bar Gold Mine, and gammons to hold shares in it.'

"I'll not give you away,' says the howner stern enough; "but I reckon you don't sail no more vessels in which I 'ave any hinterest.'

And though Trainer felt sick at that, 'e knew 'e ought to be jugged for conspiracy, as the hother told 'im. So it was a let-off just to get the sack, even if jobs were tough gettin'. And that was the bust up of that racket. I guess Trainer took it out of 'is wife, for 'e owned that she went to live with 'er mother for a month when he got 'ome.

"But 'e got no more vessels to command, for when it came out 'ow the Kertch Bar business 'ad been worked, the men that was sacked gave Trainer the worst kind of a name.

And gradual he came down again to sail before the mast. That's what a woman did for 'im."

"It warn't her fault," said Ben—"not hers at all. It was him that was to blame. What kind of a man is it to give a woman money to keep?"

"Well, I can't keep none myself," owned Bill; "or else I wouldn't be looking for a ship. If I could find a woman wot would keep it and make it last longer, I'd take 'er on."

"Not you," said Ben. "A sailorman ain't got no more business to be married till he swallows the anchor than a woman has to own a ship. And as for that barque that's just gone out, you mark me, she'll be lost."

"All along of the widder in black?" asked Bill.

"All along of her," replied Ben, stubbornly.

And they went up town.

A LONE WOLF.

THE black wolf that belonged to Seth Briggs, of Blue Rapid, had a howl which was as far superior to the howl of a common uneducated wolf, as Patti's notes are to those of an ordinary street singer, and it was believed by Seth's neighbours that Seth himself derived considerable æsthetic gratification from the fact. But Sydney Stockton had no musical tastes beyond a concertina, and being located within two hundred yards of Briggs's house, the wolf worried him and his old mother dreadfully.

"What's wrong with the wolf—that cussed wolf of yours, Briggs?" he asked desperately.

"Wrong?" said Briggs, with great surprise. "Why, nothing. He's the healthiest, brightest kind of intellectual animal ever you see."

And he expatiated on the qualities displayed by the cub when he first got him by

shooting his dam, and showed how he had improved. But Stockton, though he was as mild as new buttermilk, sneered at it and took no interest.

And yet Seth's wolf knew "considerable," and had never been above learning from dogs. His voice was trained to the highest pitch of perfection. When he sat well back and opened the throttle-valve to its fullest extent he was capable of lifting the roof off a little place like the Albert Hall. He could fill a square mile block, and on a calm winter's night, when there was not a breath of air to shake a snow crystal from a thin twig, the vibrant quality of his vocal chords was distinctly discernible at a distance of a mile and a half. There was a legend that he had been heard ten miles away when he went to the river and howled down stream to the reflected moon. For water carries sound wonderfully.

And his compass was just grand. He could climb down from the mountain peak of the upper C to the darkest abysses of the lower G. In times of lofty excitement he even sprang into the empyrean, and, surpassing himself, touched the highest possible note. He went into theoretical realms of music far out of mortal sight. A stray musician once

asserted he heard him breathe the profound bass note of Niagara. He touched the infinite at both ends of the scale.

And he put colour into his work. He was no mere machine, coldly perfect in vocalization, but without soul. He could be like a whole opera. He could be savage, tender, terrible, fierce, and pathetic. To see him sit on his black hind-quarters and yawn tremendous chromaticisms would have put joy into the heart of an impresario. But poor old Mrs. Stockton would much rather have put arsenic in his grub.

"Sydney," the old woman said one morning, "I couldn't sleep a wink last night all along of that wolf. I wish you would speak to Briggs again."

"I did speak, and I'm fair sick of speaking, maw," said her dutiful son. "But I'll try it again."

And he climbed a fence and interviewed Briggs.

"Say, Briggs, that doggoned wolf of yours kept my mother awake all last night. I wish you'd clap a muzzle on him."

"I've a right to keep a wolf on my premises if I've a mind to, and he ain't used to bein' muzzled," said Briggs. "But you

can buy a muzzle and put it on him yourself if you like."

But the prospect of interviewing the open head of the wolf awed Stockton. He went back home dolorously.

The next night was crisp and wonderful. Under the moon the long prairie gleamed like polished silver, and till midnight the silence was as deep as the winter's frost. But then the wolf slipped out of the stable window, and, slinking through the shadows of the barn, came out on a dry manure pile to contemplate the infinite. It sank deep into his inmost soul. Whether he recognized in that moment his own cosmic insignificance and then rose suddenly on the wings of a great intuition to see his own necessity in the majestic scheme of the universe, cannot now be known. But he began a sad adagio in C sharp minor, and into the first movement of his new moonlight sonata he put the sufferings and aspirations of all wolf-kind. The music wound in and out tenderly, but into the painful dream of the past came stronger hope, and finally growing more and more personal and objective, he pulled out all the stops, jammed his paws on the pedals, and whooped a magnificent and triumphant pæan

of passion. He believed in his own destiny.

But the poets and musicians of the world are visionaries. They are not necessary in the world of those who have no ideals. They lose the present, and, seeing into the future, are but blind.

Briggs' wolf, as he soared again above the particular, and mingled with the universal, was oblivious of a shadow by the dividing fence. Against the sinking moon on the lofty manure pile, the dark shape of the maker of music was outlined with the utmost distinctness. The same moon that shone through the great gap of his open jaws gleamed down a rifle-barrel, and as the wolf came to a cadence that was inclusive of all philosophy, there was a sharp crack and another dying fall.

"He should have kept the howl on his premises, too," said Stockton, as he went back home.

ON A TAUT BOWLINE.

"Come, get out the spun-yarn winch," said Tom the foretopman to his mate.

And Jack grinned as the lazy crowd approved from their bunks and chests in the foc'sle of the *Winchester*.

"I guess it's not Sunday if Jack doesn't reel off a cuffer. Come, you brancher and climber, give it lip," said Tom.

For Jack Gray was for ever yarning, and one of his long nicknames was "That reminds me." A legend which he had never contradicted told how the Captain of the *Loch Vennachar*, who was reported to write stories, had taken him on as second mate one trip, just to hear him gas. For though he was then in the foc'sle, he had a second greaser's ticket and was as good aft as forward save for a real natural gift of insubordination which more than once landed him in the arms of a policeman.

"It's a sight too hot to work the winch,"

said Jack as he wiped his forehead. "I haven't any imagination."

"Then tell the truth for once," said McIntosh, the oldest hand on board. "That last yarn of yourn about the old *Battleaxe* was too much for me. I felt sea sick."

"Dry up, you old humbug," said Jack, laughing, "any one of yours would lay over the broadest of mine, acres on each side. But did I ever tell you chaps about Sutherland of the *Commonwealth*, the chap they called Three-fingered Jack?"

And the whole crowd said, "No!"

"Well, this is true," said Jack.

And the whole crowd said, "Oh!"

"You be d——d," said Jack. "But all the same it is."

"It was four years ago, or may be five, I'd just come back from the States where I'd been working on a farm, thinking I'd had enough of the sea. And I had till I'd had too much of the farm, which is the way with sailormen. And that reminds me I'll tell you about that farm some day.

"But as I was saying, I'd come home from the States, and being the very deadest kind of dead broke, all my folks were a bit chilly and gave me to understand that they had at

last made up their minds I was no good. And the old man he stood in front of the fire and went on about my opportunities which I'd wasted, in spite of his hiding me when I was a kid, and the girls seemed t .nink I ate too much, and they sniffed at the smell of my tobacco. So I up and said .w a fine opening for a bright young man in a slum down east, and I hooked it off to Sailor-town and tramped very lonesome all over the F t India Dock. May be some of you chaps have heard of it, and have cooled yourselves on a big stone bollard by its gleaming waters."

"Go on," said the outraged crowd, "and don't talk rot."

"Well, never mind the poetry," said Jack, "you're uneducated, and don't see the beauty of it. Of course I could have shoved in somewhere, but . . . ed a craft bound for Australia or Ne .ld. And I had to wait till I tumbled across the *Commonwealth*, whose skipper was Sutherland. When I had shipped they told me that he was one of the worst men sailing out of the port of London. For he was a bully and a drunkard. However, I didn't care. I guessed I could manage the passage in her any rate, and I meant to skip in Port Lyttleton.

"We saw nothing of him till we were about letting go the tug boat, but then this blooming amiable historic character crawled on deck and began loosing off language that made the lady passengers fairly flinch and sent them below. He was a big strong beggar, but soaked in liquor and a bit of a wreck with it. He looked more given to drink than when I saw him at Green's Home. And then he was civil. However, it was only in the beginning of his drinks that he troubled us. For when he was really under way he would retire to his own quarters and not show up for weeks. Only the steward saw him, and he had a blazing bad time of it. When we were running down our easting he never came on deck for three weeks, the shirking old scoundrel. And we had a pretty bad spell of it too.

"There was a nice kind of a companion for him on board though, a Sydney woman, I forget her name, but she drank too. And they carried on shameful. Two old maiden ladies named Wilson used to go into hysterics about it, they were so scandalized. And there was blue blazes to pay, for they abused the captain to his face and cut the Sydney woman, and talked at her, till one day she

flew at them and upset the pair over a hen-coop and then retired sobbing to lay a complaint before the skipper.

"And the old man who was stretched out on the floor of his cabin said 'Eh, eh, what's that?' And then he slept again and murmured loving words to a bottle of square face. At least that's what the steward said.

"But after that he began to recover a bit, and we knew we'd have him on deck. Only we didn't guess how he'd come, and in what shape, and if the mate had known he'd have kept clear of him, you bet. For the chief was an Austrian and as quiet as a sick sheep, with never a word out of him except when he worked the ship.

"But this day (I remember I was killing time on the main topsail yard cutting off seizings and shoving on new ones) we heard a devil of a how-d'ye-do down below, and a woman or two screaming. And then the mate shot up out of the companion in such a hurry as I've never seen. And after him came the skipper, purple-faced with passion and whisky, with a cutlass in his fist, running like blazes. The woman folk on the poop yelled blue murder and the men turned white and skipped out of the way. And the mate

fell down the ladder, screaming for help in high Dutch and low Dutch and English mixed, and as he scrambled to his feet again the skipper almost came on top of him.

"'I'll give you argument,' screamed Sutherland, 'I'll give you argument.'

"So then I guessed, what was correct, that they had argued over the bally arithmetic of an observation. For we heard after that Three-fingered Jack broke the slate over the mate's head before he got his cutlass.

"I'd never believe the old man could have run as he did. But he wasn't more than six inches out of striking distance as they made up the starboard side to the forehatch. Then the mate caught his foot in a ringbolt that I'd often bashed my big toe against, and fell full length. Every one on deck let a yell out of him then, for the skipper raised his weapon and was just about bringing it down on the poor helpless devil's head. I leant over the yard and slung my marline-spike at him. But it missed. And just then the bo'son, who had been standing alongside the foremast, stepped out and hit the old man square on the ear with such force that he fell like a sack of flour. He never moved, and the bo'son grabbed the cutlass and hove it overboard.

It took him some time to come to ; and the Bo'son retired gracefully to the rear.

"'What's this ?' says Sutherland presently. And then he sings out 'Steward.' And after a bit he opened his eyes and staggered to his feet and went aft as quiet as you like. And what's more he never said anything about it. I often wondered if he knew what had happened, for he had another week's drinking then.

"I heard the second mate, who was an Englishman and a good officer, speak to the mate :

"'I'll help you lock him up and take charge,' said he.

"But Dutchy shook his head. He was a poor weak-minded fool without the guts of a new-born mouse. If it hadn't been for Graham, the second, we'd have run the *Commonwealth* ourselves, made a blooming republic of her. But Graham had grit in him and savvy and didn't really care a damn for the skipper. For that night in the middle watch, when I left the wheel at four bells he called me as I was going off the poop.

"'I want you to lend me a hand, Gray. Go and call the Bo'son."

"So I roused out the bo'son, and Graham gave him charge of the dec'k. Then we went down and together we took all the arms out of the racks in the cabin and locked them up. Then we corralled all the liquor we could find and locked them up too, not that it was much good to do it, for the captain had a private store, and we couldn't very well take that without the consent and assistance of the mate.

"Up to this time I'd never come into collision with the skipper, although my marlinspike nearly had. But of that he knew nothing. But it came round again for my turn for the first wheel in the middle watch, it was blowing pretty stiff and we were under fore and maintopsails and reefed foresail. The wind was well out on the port beam and there was a heavy sea running.

"Just about two bells the second mate, whose watch I was in, came up to me.

"'I'm going to take the jib in,' said he, 'so just keep her before the wind, and mind you don't let her come to till I tell you.'

"And down he went off the poop. I ran her off till the wind was on the back of my neck, when all of a sudden I got a crack there too, which nearly knocked me silly. But as

I looked round wondering what the blazes it was, I saw the skipper, who had crawled up and sneaked round behind. And, thinking she shouldn't be running before the wind, he hit me without even saying 'what the how the,' or asking 'why I had her that way?'

"By the Lord but I was mad. I was fair furious at being struck in such a cowardly manner, and without counting costs I let go the wheel and returned the blow with interest right between his eyes, blacking them finely, as I found out afterwards. He never reckoned I would dare, for he didn't attempt to ward it off nor to return it. He just said 'Oh,' and ran for the companion which was at the forward end of the poop. I stood for one moment kind of silly, but I felt he was after a weapon, and if he'd tried to slaughter the mate for an argument, what would he do for such a jog between his eyes? And I was mad too and clean forgot the men on the jib-boom. I jumped forward like a cat and got to the companion first and clapped my back to it. When he saw his way barred he squared up and made at me, but just at that moment she gave a heavy lurch and upset his balance a little and that gave me an opening. I landed him heavily right under the chin

and back he went with his heels against the bucket rack and overended right over the low rail. I had disposed of him satisfactorily, and I ran back to the wheel, thinking that for one watch he wasn't likely to do any more sneaking round.

But during the few seconds that I'd been away from the wheel, the ship had come up in the wind and the sails were shaking a good one, and the second mate was roaring as he came aft. I hove the helm hard up and was only just in time to save her from broaching to altogether. As she filled, the second mate came up on the poop in a devil of a rage, as well he might be, asking if I wanted to take the masts out of her and wash the men off the boom. I might have justified myself, but I preferred to take his jaw until I found out whether the old man had broken his neck or not. Though I hadn't wanted to kill him, still, if he was dead, it might occasion a lot of trouble if folks knew how it had happened.

"So I sang very small, and took all Graham said like a lamb. And that soothed him. He went forward and finished his job. But he was a good while gone, and I heard some talk presently on the quarter-deck.

When he came up on the poop he took a few turns up and down and then walked up to me. Standing with his back against the hub of the wheel, he took a look into the binnacle and asked :

"Did you see anything of the captain while I was forward ? "

"Why, no, sir," said I promptly enough.

"'He must have been up here,' said Graham, 'for as I was coming along the quarter-deck just now I stumbled over him. Mr. Schmidt is with him now, but I'm hanged if I don't believed he's croaked.'

"That gave me the jumps. Thought I, 'I might be hanged if he *is*.'

"'Or pretty near it,' went on Graham, 'for he's cut bad and knocked quite stiff. I suppose he's been at it again and got paid for his soak.'

"However, the beggar wasn't dead or even near it, and in the morning he turned up on deck quite sober and pretty quiet. And the strangest thing of the lot is that he did this time just what he'd done before when the bo'son outed him with that jolt on his ear-hole ; he kept quiet and said nothing, not a word. But till we reached Port Lyttleton I wasn't easy. A man that'd come behind

another and plug him as he did me once might do it again. And though maybe he really didn't remember when he was sober, he might remember when he got drunk again, for in the States I was partners with a tough who was built that way. And that's just what really happened with Sutherland.

"Perhaps it was the scare he got by his trip over the break of the poop that kept him off soaking, but he was as sober as a pint of lime-juice for most of the time till we neared the New Zealand coast, and he was not quite so uncivil. And he kept quiet with the dona from Sydney. Yet all the time I couldn't help having a notion that he suspected it was I downed him that night. For he took more notice of me than I liked.

"And then of course just as we were in soundings and he wanted all his calf's brains he tanked up again and out it all came.

"The second mate's watch that night was the middle watch too, and lucky for me I was a bit behind at muster. For just as Mr. Graham was singing out our names the skipper rushed on deck, and they all knew he was mad drunk. I was just coming along, shoving my arms into my monkey jacket, when I heard his voice.

"'Where's the swine that knocked me off the poop?' he roared.

"'He's got a pistol, sir,' said one of the crowd to the second mate on the quarter-deck.

"And sure enough he had.

"'What's his name, Graham?' he yelled. 'I'll kill him as tried to kill me.'

"'Nobody touched you, sir, it was an accident,' said the second mate, trying to soothe him.

"'To blazes with your accident,' said the skipper, and then he remembered me.

"'Where's that swine Gray?'

"And he peered over the rail, trying to make me out in the dark. But I was well behind the mainmast just in case he did clap eyes on me and loose off his gun.

"'Tell Gray to come here,' said Graham, but I knew what he meant by the tone of his voice. He didn't want any murder done. Now the silly goat of a Schmidt would have made mischief easy by really trying to get me to show up. He was dancing behind the roaring skipper like a poor devil of a dancing bear on a hot plate with a ring in the gristle of his nose. But when I heard Graham's voice I slipped out and went forward and got

my own six-shooter and shoved it in my pocket just in case.

"And no more than in time, for Three-fingered Jack came down on the quarter-deck and began to look for me in the crowd. Then he came for'ard, grinding his teeth and opening out with oaths that equalled anything I ever heard. For he was one of those men who invent new curses as they go on, and most ingenious he was. And I skinned up the fore rigging and lay low in the top till he got tired of looking for me and went back to soaking again. And there wasn't any killing after all, not a darned kill so to speak. Only I kept quiet and never showed up till we were in Lyttleton, when I skipped over the side and went ashore. Glad I was to slide out of the leaky, bug-haunted old hooker with a whole skin. I didn't much mind leaving my pay-day behind me, for I landed a job right off in a grocery store.

"Graham saw me in the street one day.

"'Did you really knock the old man out?' he asked.

"'What do you think?' said I.

"'Well,' said he slowly, and as if he was considering it, 'in my opinion you chose the wrong rail to dump such trash over.'

"As he meant it, I told him the truth, and then he saw how it was I let her come up in the wind.

"'But as it stood,' said he, 'you should have taken it even if he'd kicked you. Men's lives depended on it.'

"And I guess he was right. What do you say, chaps?"

But the whole foc'sle divided and argued it out for hours, getting quite heated on ethics. They left the main point, however, to thrash out a well known and highly improper question of casuistry, very popular among seamen, which introduces a soldier, always an object of contempt in the foc'sle. And that was not settled even at eight bells.

WASH-TUB DAVIS.

They called him "English Jim the Sailor" up at Afognak, in Alaska, when they were pleased, and that "derned mad Britisher" when they were angry. For he was the sort of man who makes an enemy of a friend and a friend of an enemy in the twinkling of an eye. He had the humour of a Celt, the devilry of a bad Indian, and the solidity of a true Saxon, yet no one knew who was his dearest friend; for if a man went out of Afognak for a week he would find Jim camping in the shack of his last great enemy, while his former partner eyed him sulkily from the other side of the bit of mud they called a street.

"Can I get a job here?" he asked when he came ashore from the *Mary Stubbs*, a wretched little trading schooner belonging to Seattle. He spoke to the first man he saw sitting on a pile of sawn boards on the wharf.

"Mebbe and mebbe not," replied the man, who was rather a sulky sort of hog, and as silent as they make them.

"Where?"

"At the stickmula, likely."

He used the Chinook word for sawmill. But Jim had been knocking about the coast for a good time, and understood him.

"Or the cannery," added the man. "Can't you smell it?"

"You bet!" said Jim. For a salmon cannery has a very distinct odour down wind —so distinct, indeed, that foreign consumers would hardly like to eat the stuff if they smelt it, even without seeing Chinamen walking in it before it gets concealed in a can.

So Jim got a job at the mill. He worked first with the shingle sawyer, and then at the lath-mill, where he undertook to make laths himself. In the process he lost his temper and very nearly lost his thumb. He had to lie by for a few days, and then went wedging-off.

"Great Scott!" said he, "but this kind of work is work." But he did not like getting up early, and he made himself popular with the men and unpopular with the boss by

trying to disarrange the whistle which blew at five o'clock in the morning to rouse the men out. He borrowed a Winchester rifle and bought some ammunition, and, getting up at four, he tried to shoot away the whistle from the top of the mill.

"What's that shooting going on so early?" asked the interested town. But, of course, no one knew until one morning the whistle wouldn't blow. In fact, they found it lying on the roof. For Jim managed to hit it at the end of a week. It was quite characteristic of him that he didn't mind getting up early to do mischief. But he was given away by the boss seeing him with the rifle. He called to Jim.

"Say, young fellow, what are you doing with that Winchester?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," said Jim. "I'm just taking it back to the man that lent it me."

"Um," said the boss, and Jim turned away. But Mr. Reed stopped him.

"Are you a good shot, Atkins?"

"Pretty fair, Mr. Reed," replied Jim with a grin.

"Could you hit a whistle on a saw-mill at a hundred yards, for instance?" asked Reed.

"If I tried I might, sir."

"Come up to the office and you shall get your money," said the boss.

And when he paid him off, minus the cost of the whistle-repairing, he suggested that Jim might try the military life. But Jim didn't tell him that he had tried it, with no more success than managing to desert without being nailed.

He went in as partner with a Siteum Siwash, or half-bred Indian, named Pete, who did no work and only kept himself in exercise by thumping an Indian woman who lived with him.

This displeased Jim until he found that the Klootchman really didn't mind it. But one night Pete managed to get a bottle of whisky, which was strictly against the law. Then he tried to thrash Jim and got very badly broken up, although the squaw did hang on to Jim's neck while he was pounding thunder out of her prostrate man. It sickened Jim, and having no money he made up to the night-watchman at the mill, and slept in the sawdust by the fires which were kept banked up all night.

Then he went to work at the cannery, but the Chinamen didn't like him, for no Orientals have any sympathy with a practical

joker. He thrashed one of them very badly, and got the bounce at once. He determined to return to San Francisco; but when he tried it he learnt that his unpopularity with the big mills meant trouble for him, for they controlled all but one or two of the schooners that came into Afognak. He showed his discharges to one fishy skipper after another, and they shook their heads.

"Well, then, let me work my passage down," he urged. "I'm dog-tired of this hole."

"You've made it too hot and not hot enough," said Wash-tub Davis, a regular old whaler with a beard down to the pit of his stomach.

"What do you mean?" asked Jim.

"You ask Mr. Reed," replied Davis, and then Jim tumbled to what was up.

"I think it pretty low down to try and keep me here, Mr. Reed," he said, "when you won't give me any work."

"You should have thought of that before you shot away my whistle," said Reed, who had a long memory and no particular love of a joke.

"Never mind," said Jim, "you can't keep me here." And he went down to the wharf

again and pallee in with the same loafer who had told him about work at the mill.

"What do they call the skipper of this thundering old schooner 'Wash-tub' for?"

"One of his men made a wash-tub, and Davis sold it to a Siwash for a dollar," said the man. "He's meaner than a yaller dog."

"I'll beat him, you bet," cried Jim. "I'm damned if I don't go down in his schooner and in no other!"

And that night he met some of the men of the schooner who were drinking. Jim borrowed a dollar or two on his bowie-knife, and set up the drinks for the crowd, the mate among them.

"That skipper of yours is a daisy, ain't he?" said Jim. "He won't give me a show to work my passage with you."

"Did you try him?" asked the mate, who was the only one in the lot who had been a deep-water sailor.

Jim nodded.

"I'll speak to him for you," said Richards.

"I wouldn't if I were you," Jim answered. And he told the man the reason. The mate, who was now very reasonably drunk, retailed it to the men and they "allowed" it was a thundering shame.

"See here, tilicum," said Richards, hiccupping, "you can come. We'll stow you away."

But Jim cunningly made many objections.

"You'll get fired yourself," he urged.

"What!" roared the mate; "me get fired? Not much, man; I'm solid with the owners, real solid. And what I say goes. You bet it goes. And what's more, Wash-tub will go, and I'll have the schooner myself."

He drank again and almost wept. For, indeed, the liquor sold up in Alaska might make a brass monkey weep.

"And you shall be mate," he sobbed. "I like you, that's what I do."

So they carried him on board and laid him in his bunk and covered him up with fishy blankets. He extricated his head, and, with tears running down his cheeks, asked for Jim.

"Here I am, old man," said Jim, who was sober and shaking with laughter. Richards grasped his hand affectionately.

"You reckon I'm full, but I ain't," he murmured. "I'll remember."

Next morning Jim was on the wharf again, and was leaning against the schooner's rail when old Wash-tub tumbled on deck.

"Now, then, what are you doing here?" he grumbled. "You get off. Sling your hook now."

"All right, Davis," said Jim coolly.

"*Captain* Davis, you tramp!" roared Davis. "I'll have you know that I've a handle to my name!"

"That's good," said Jim insolently. "It's a dirty name and a dirty skipper to touch without a handle."

And, stepping back, he looked out for a flying belaying-pin if one was lying handy. But Wash-tub only gasped at the atrocious insult, and, before he caught his breath, Jim was fifty yards away. He heard a gale of blasphemy behind him which would have sunk a floating bethel or a missionary boat at its moorings, but he just sauntered off without even turning round. For he had taken in his man and knew what would rile him most.

He saw Richards again late that night, and, true enough, he remembered what he had said. But Jim looked melancholy.

"I suppose you'll cry off," he murmured disconsolately. "I can see Wash-tub is a holy terror. I wonder that you chaps dare stay with him."

"Dare!" said Richards, "you bet he don't tire me. For, if he won't take taffy, I just get mad too. I'll stow you away. But I didn't think you was the sort to be scared."

Jim laughed.

"I meant that I'd have to fill him up with lead," he remarked.

And, as the devil was that moment uppermost, he looked as if he did mean it, which pleased Richards vastly.

"You're all there, tilicum," he said; "now you come down on board to-night about eleven and we'll stow you away. But you'll have to keep dark, for if you show up Wash-tub will haze you and haze me and make it as hot as hell."

"Right you are," said Jim; "but I won't give you away, and if he bowls me out I'll stand the racket myself."

The schooner cleared out next morning at dawn, and all the time the rest were working her out of the harbour Jim lay up in the darkest berth in the forecastle, and sniggered to himself to think that he was loafing.

"By gosh! I'm Wash-tub's only passenger," he said; "But when I get down to San Francisco I'll have a joke on him."

He lighted his pipe at the swinging lamp,

and went back to his blankets just as the men came in. There were only two to each watch, and of these two were little good-tempered Finns with backs as broad as a boat. They came in laughing.

"What's up?" asked Jim of one of the Americans.

"Why, there's Wash-tub gassing about how he's done you," said the man. "You riled him, you jest did: he's bin tellin' Richards about your saying as he wanted a handle to his name. Those chaps up at Afognak had got it fixed up to make you run a sawdust barrer afore they let you out."

"They had, had they?" said Jim; "well, I've done them this time. Reed will feel sick. I'd like to fire his old mill for him; he's a nigger-driver, not a man for white men at all. He loves a Chinaman better than a white man any time."

And they discussed Chinese cheap labour for half the day. When the weather was fine there was little to do to the schooner, or rather there was so much to do that nothing was ever done.

"A spot of white paint would ruin her for ever," said Richards. "We'd all get kind of dissatisfied, and so long as she holds to-

gether, why, she holds. And I guess she's insured."

Jim found his life as a passenger not without its drawbacks. For one thing he was a very active young fellow, and staying in the forecastle was, as he put it, "nigh on to as bad as being in the penitentiary." Doing nothing and grubbing made him full of himself, and he was horribly keen on getting to work. He almost begged Richards to let him come up and show himself.

"He can't do anything but set me to work," urged Jim.

But when the mate was at sea and well away from Bourbon whisky, he hadn't such a great idea of the solidarity existing between himself and the owners. And though Jim was savage when he was sober, it was the other way about with Richards.

"No," he said, "not by a jugful. What more do you want? You're doing nothing and you're grubbing good, and lying on the broad of your back. And if you show up he'll know we're in it, and he'll work blazes out of us all. I know him. And besides, I don't want to quit her for the rest of the summer. Then I'm going east."

"You are, are you?" said Jim to himself.

For he knew all about going east. The desire lasts till a man gets his money, and a few drinks, and then it's the money goes east, and not the man.

But he prayed for a good gale of wind, in order for another hand to be needed. If every one was in trouble, and extra help needed, old Wash-tub wouldn't so much mind learning that he had another good man on board. Yet all the trip the weather was sickening good; it didn't blow hard enough to blow the ancient stink of fish out of her, though now she was choked with canned goods. And the heat was great, and the insect life on board rampant. Jim had all he could do to save his toes and his nose from the cockroaches, and certain other demons played havoc with his skin.

One night when they were off the coast of California, running down before a light northerly wind which hardly stirred a heavy fog hiding the land, Jim could bear it no longer. Though he often loafed about for'ard when it was dark, he never ventured aft. For Wash-tub was a light sleeper in good weather. Indeed, as he was half asleep all day on a rug spread by the wheel, he hardly needed rest at night. Yet now Jim

went right aft in the beginning of the middle watch, and insisted on relieving the Finn who was at the wheel. Richards remonstrated.

"Oh, go to thunder!" said Jim. "The old man is asleep, isn't he? Then what's the trouble? I must do something."

And, sooner than raise an argument Richards let him have his way. But he kept the Finn handy in case the skipper did rouse out. But the Finn lay down and went to sleep, and before Richards heard him old Davis was on deck in his stockinged feet. Jim slouched his hat over his eyes, and Davis came and looked at the binnacle. Richards came up at that moment.

"It's a steady breeze," he said stupidly.

"Well, and who said it wasn't?" was the skipper's polite reply. And turning round, he went below. Richards jumped to the Finn and roused him.

"Go to the wheel," he whispered, and catching hold of Jim he ran him for'ard.

"You're a pretty sort!" he said, when they were for'ard of the mainmast.

"Let go!" said Jim; "he never tumbled. What's wrong with you?"

"What's wrong?" asked the mate. "If

he'd seen you, he'd have disgruntled you! Go and turn in."

And grumbling, Jim retired to the stinking forecastle.

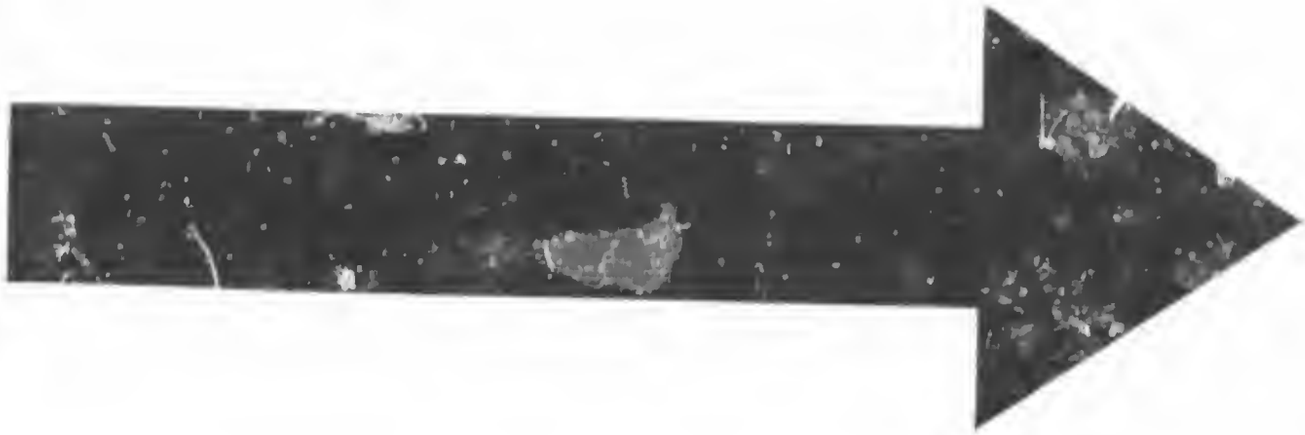
Two days later they were alongside the wharf, and Jim skipped ashore without being seen. At Shanghai Brown's he met an old mate of his and borrowed a couple of dollars to treat Richards and the others with. He met them that night on Battery Street, and Richards looked particularly angry.

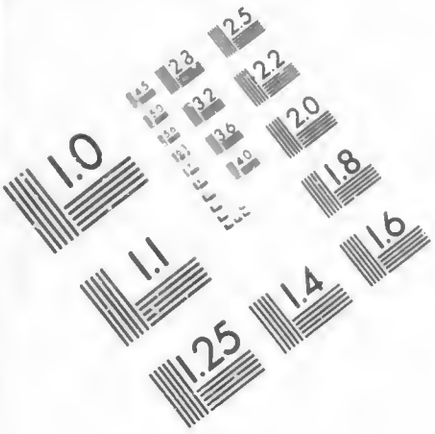
"What's wrong, mate?" asked Jim.

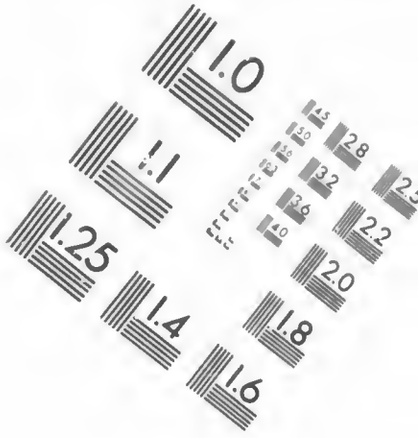
"He give us all the bounce," said Richards "I dunno what made him. He's a swine—a holy swine."

But Jim made no suggestion of an appeal to the owners. He offered to stand drinks at the bar of the American House. He spent his two dollars before he left.

Next morning he went down the water-front to try and ship in the *Monowai*, which he had sailed in before; and, as luck would have it, the mate told him to bring his bag on board at once. He went off to raise the stuff to get an outfit, and as he came away from the Oceanic Steamship Wharf, he met a gang of out-of-works whom he knew. He stayed talking with them, and, as he turned







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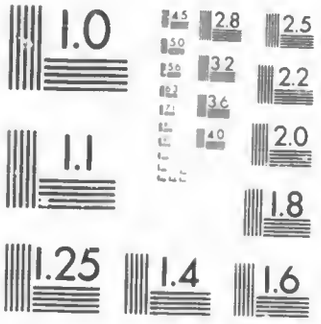

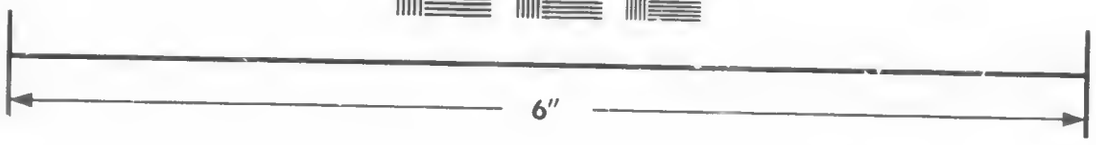

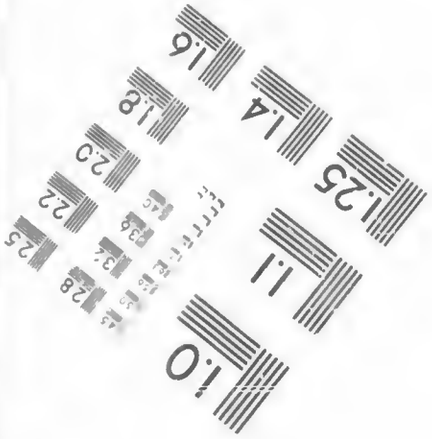

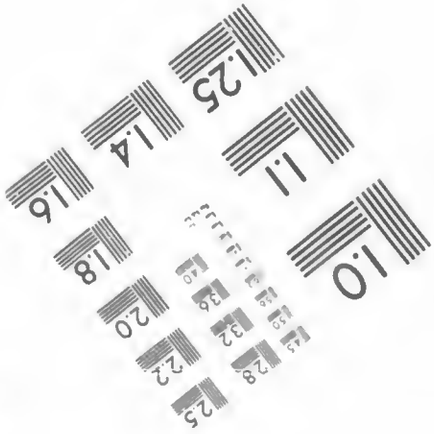

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away, he saw old Wash-tub Davis come booming along like a rolling barrel. He caught sight of Jim, stopped, stared, walked on again, and, turning round, came back. Jim looked at him unintelligently.

"How did you get down?" he asked, open-mouthed.

"Down where?" said Jim.

"Down here!"

"What d'ye mean?" asked Jim, staring him blankly in the face.

"I mean from Afognak," said Wash-tub.

"Afognak," mused Jim. "And where's Afognak?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know where Afognak is?" roared the old man angrily.

"Why the devil should I know?" said Jim, pretending to be angry in his turn.

"You'll be saying you don't know Kodiak next," said Davis.

"What's Kodiak?"

And Davis rubbed his eyes.

"Ain't your name Jim, and weren't you at Afognak three weeks ago?" insisted the skipper.

Jim shrugged his shoulders.

"You haven't told me where Afognak is yet," he remarked gently.

And then Davis sighed.

"Well, this beats hell!" he murmured; "if I hadn't known it wasn't possible I would have sworn you were the man."

He walked on. But when he got about thirty yards off Jim hailed him.

"What cheer, Wash-tub!"

Davis stopped.

"You wouldn't let me work my passage," said Jim, "so I came down on your old hooker as a passenger. What's the price of tubs to-day?"

And jumping in a horse-car which was coming by, he left the skipper speechless.

THE MARK ON THE SHACK.

At Scott's Gulch things were booming, and the pipes were on the roar as they squirted their four and five inch streams into the gold-bearing gravel. For the Gulch was a big hydraulicking mine, and millions of tons of stuff, some ancient deposit, were now cut open. Each yard of it carried twenty-five to thirty cents'-worth of gold, and when the rains were good, and the flume overflowing, the men who owned it coined money. It was not the sort of show one turns into a company, said Scott as he stood with his back to the front of the fire in his club at San Francisco.

"We are getting gold, gold, sir," he said. "And if any one wants to buy, he may cube up the contents of the Gulch and pay a dollar for every four cubic yards. I'll take my chance else."

He had a manager at the mine in Southern Oregon, for Scott's Gulch is in Oregon, not

California ; and Joe Hall, otherwise Joseph Septimus Hall, was a man of trust. He was all there, every bit of him ; for he was keen, hard, clever, and only a rare smile showed any streak of tenderness in him. But when he did smile, it was like a gleam of rosy dawn on an icy peak.

He had some ten men working under him, leaving out the two cooks, who were Chinamen of course. One of the pipemen was a Chinaman too, and Ching was peculiarly proud of his job ; he considered he could wash down more gravel in a day than any white man among them. Frequently when a Chinaman takes on a skilful job, he is like a baby about it, and has a pride in it far beyond that of one brought up to the work, just as a well-bred man out on the loose in the West is jealous and touchy of his reputation for being able to hold up his end. But this is by the way.

There was also a Mexican whose name was almost unpronounceable. Consequently he was known as "Kin Savvy," which is United States for "Quien sabe?" ("Who knows?"), as frequent on Spanish lips as "mañana" or "to-morrow." But then Kin Savvy was not quite so lazy as the average Mexican. He did not like work, but he worked quick and

worked hard, and knew something about gold-mining. The other foreigners in the gang at the Gulch were three Germans, every one of them a "hard case," if hard workers too. And when a German does rise to "toughness" he is tough indeed. And pretty brutal, as the natives in many of their colonies know too well.

The Gulch was about three miles from Flynn's Ford, up the Illinois River, and the flume which brought the water down for the hydraulicking ran about two miles further up into the hills. When the river was well alive with rain and riley with mud things went well. Rain was all they wanted, and this winter they had rain and no mistake about it. The long dark valley was for ever blind with it or full of mists. When it cleared the far hills were sharp and closely defined against perpetual dark clouds, and then in an hour the rain swept over the coast range or came back from the Siskyous and hid their jagged outline for the day. For the mountains of snow bred storms and soaked the land till the grass was rank.

But rain, if it meant work, meant discomfort, and workers are for ever on the growl.

"We're hogs, that's what we are," said

Thorn, who was an American, the only one of three there, "and we live in a hog-pen, and the boss *is* boss. The only consolation is that he's an American. Now, down Plumas County there's a deal too many darned Britishers."

And he took a chew of tobacco.

It was then Sunday, and they worked only half a day, and for that got time and a half—that is, six hours counted as nine for pay. The Germans and the Mexican were off into Waldo after dinner, and they left the rest of the gang loafing and praying for Monday.

"Why is it," disconsolately asked Smith, who was an Englishman, "that we pray for Sunday, and when it comes we hate it?"

But no one could answer him, for no one knew that even work was better than sheer idleness.

At night things livened up, for the Germans came back very drunk, showing drunkenness, and Kin Savvy came with them, drunk too. But he didn't show it, save by an inclination to dance and a disposition to sing Mexican love-songs.

They brought out cards and gambled damply in a damp hut. They drank more, for they had brought back two bottles of

so-called Old Rye, which had been newly composed in Portland some week or two before. The result was the usual one ; there was a row, and very nearly a fight. But just before it got serious, Hall came in. It was eight o'clock, and as black as a candidate's character after an election campaign.

"Boys," he shouted, "get on your slickers and out with you! The flume is bust up near Hackett's and we must fix it up right now."

"Not me," said the sulkiest of the Germans, by name Schultz, "I'm sick and tired, and I'm for my bunk."

"What's that?" cried Hall, who stood in the middle of them with the water running off his slicker or oil-coat, "What's that you say, Schultz?"

"I said I'd be damned if I'd go, and not then," answered the German sulkily.

"You come up in the morning and bring your account," cried Hall angrily. And with a little difficulty he got the others to come.

They worked till twelve o'clock, and save for a lantern which was no more than a miserable glimmer, and the rare gleam of a spent moon, they were in the dark in a dark

forest. Though the water had been shut off at the head of the flume it still came into it in considerable quantities, and dripping through the wreck, it soaked them to the skin. They bruised themselves on the rocks, and swore and lost their tempers, and by the time the flume was fixed up for beginning again at six in the morning, they were ready to fight at the dropping of a hat.

Hall took little notice or none of their curses while they worked. And certainly they toiled like slaves. As long as the job was done nothing much mattered. He really looked on them with a certain contemptuous pity, as a hard but good-natured driver might on grunting steers. What matter if the team grunted in a bog if they pulled the wagon through?

But when they got back Schultz was blind drunk and came out to show himself.

"You schwein," he called his countrymen, and they didn't mind very much. And then he proceeded to abuse Hall, who knocked him down out of hand. Then in the black, muddy darkness hell was let loose, and the other Germans took sides and with their partner made a combined attack on Hall.

But now the other men woke up, and as

there was no love lost between them and the Germans, they pulled Hall out of a mixed pile and sent the Teutons flying.

And next morning Schultz went with two black eyes to get his money. He received it in silence and set off to Waldo. Hall went out and addressed the other Germans.

"If you want to stay you can," said he, "but if you give me any lip you'll get the bounce. Do you hear me?"

"Ja, we hear," muttered the three, and they went back to work. But they did not forgive Hall. For Schultz stayed in Waldo, and worked on their minds till the boss was no more than a beast to them.

One day the Chinaman, Ching, came to him. "Missa Hall, you no wantshee die. Suls hatee you bad. Me hear him talkee-talkee in Waldo."

And of course Hall said "Rot!" or some more foul Western equivalent. The very notion of being scared of a German tickled him to death.

But perhaps if he had known Schultz's record in the East he might have thought more of it. It is always well to consider that point when one has trouble with a man in the West. Yet perhaps nothing might have come

of it all if Joe had not done a little bit of courting in Waldo. For Schultz had a kind of hankering after Nelly White, the daughter of the man who ran the Waldo House. She waited on the table at meal-times, and being rather pretty, she was popular. And more than popular with Hall.

After getting the Grand Bounce from the Gulch, Schultz had taken to wood-chopping at Waldo, and being a real good worker he made a fair thing of it. He usually stayed at the Waldo House, and there, one Sunday, he met Hall again. He watched his old boss talking with Nelly, and when he was sick with rage he went out and sharpened his bowie-knife on the grindstone. But he hadn't the courage to face the man and kill him. He waited.

Now at the Gulch all the men ate in a frame-house which was divided off at one end into an office and sleeping-room for Hall. At meals Hall almost always sat in one place, with his back against the frames, made there of rather less than five-eighths stuff; and in the evening he occupied another place, nearer his own room and clear of the table.

The back of the shanty abutted on a rising hill, and hardly any one went there. But one

Sunday afternoon, Kin Savvy came to Hall with a queer, doubtful look on his face. There was no one but the Chinamen about.

"Señor, Mr. Hall, you come with me, please." And he led Hall round to the back of the shack.

"What is it?" asked Hall.

And Kin Savvy showed him a small cross in red chalk on the boards.

"What of it?" said Hall.

"*Carajo!* You sit there, Señor, you sit there," said the Mexican, looking at him in obvious surprise. "These Germans are bad men."

And Hall looked up at the Mexican, who nodded and smiled, and made a motion as though he drew a six-shooter from his hip-pocket and placed it against the boards.

"Nonsense!" said Hall, and he added, "Don't say anything to any one else."

"Ching savvies," said Kin Savvy.

And he called to Ching, who brought a piece of rope with him. The Mexican measured off the distance from the corner of the old shack to the red mark, and then beckoning Hall and the Chinaman, he went inside and measured it off there. The end of

the rope just came to the place where Hall sat at night-time.

"I see Goldschmidt measure him," said Ching.

"Ha!" said Hall. "But not a word, Ching."

He put his six-shooter in his pocket that night, but he did not sit quite in his usual place; nor did he stay anywhere long. And next day he sent Ching down to Waldo with a letter to Flynn at the ford, asking for something. He got it that night, after dark, for Flynn brought it up himself on the quiet.

"When do you think they mean it?" asked Flynn, rubbing the perspiration off his brown, ugly face.

"How can I tell?" asked Hall. "Any time, I reckon. But we may fix them. I won't give it away. I want to get them."

"That's so," and Flynn nodded. "Shall I stay?"

"I guess not," said Hall. "Just drop in when you care to. If they get me you will have to hunt for Schultz and Goldschmidt. Corral the crowd, my son."

On the Sunday night following, most of the men stayed round for a bit after supper, but presently all went but Smith and the Germans, who talked a good deal and seemed

to have forgiven Hall. Goldschmidt, a thick, heavy fool of a man, even made a dull joke or two, and Hall's nerves began to get on the stretch. He had half a mind to knock him on the head just at one moment; but the next his nerves steadied, and he determined to see it through.

"Will you haf a came at karts, Mister Hall?" said Goldschmidt. And Hall saw him look at his watch. It was, he knew, just on eight o'clock.

"Yes, a game at karts," said the others.

"Are they all in it?" asked Hall, and for one quick moment he did not know what to do.

"I don't mind," he answered. "Just wait a minute."

And he went outside quickly and shut the door after him. He saw Thorn standing there.

"I saw Schultz just now," said Thorn.

"No."

"You bet it was him," said Thorn. "I thought I'd tell you. He went that way." He pointed towards Waldo.

"Stay here," said Hall in a rapid whisper. "If he comes up, call me. Don't come in unless you hear a row. Have you a gun?"

Thorn grew keen. He slapped his hip-pocket, and then Hall went in.

He found the others sitting down with the cards, a dirty and greasy pack, upon the end of the table. His usual place was vacant.

"You sit here, Goldschmidt," said he, and he saw the German turn the colour of mutton-fat powdered over with grey dust.

"It's your place," said Goldschmidt. But the others never stirred. They all looked surprised. It was evident they were not in the plot, if plot there really was.

"Sit there," said Hall, laughing. "I'll sit in your box."

"I won't," said Goldschmidt.

"You will," said Hall.

And with a sudden jump he got his hands upon the man and twirled him round and down upon the seat. The other two sat thunderstruck, for they did not understand. For a moment there was nothing said; but Ching ran in out of Hall's room, and then the two Germans rose just as Goldschmidt made a wrench to get away.

But the devil was in Joe Hall that moment, and he had the man pinned as in a vice: he could not stir an inch. And as the others made not a move, Joe Hall burst into a wicked shout of laughter. He would have been angry if any man had told him it was

hysterical. But in a manner it was. And for a little moment, that stretched out to a strange infinity, he looked into the man's devilish eyes, which were full of terror—most incredible terror. Then there came a dull blow like a signal. It was like a hand striking wood. And at that moment Goldschmidt uttered a horrible and deathly cry, which sent the man who held him back into the room. The German threw up his arms, and at the same moment Hall pulled his six-shooter and shot right over his head at the boards. Not at Goldschmidt, but at someone outside. And then he heard Thorn come in behind him. Smith had never moved, for he was a slow man, and all this was incomprehensible.

"What is it?" asked Thorn.

"I guess he's done," said Hall.

"Have you shot him?"

"No!" cried Hall. "Look at his breast."

And, indeed, just above his heart was a shining point of steel—the sharp end of a sharp knife protruding from a red spot.

"I shot *through*," said Hall. "Come, Thorn!"

And outside they found Schultz dead. For he had been shot, and falling had been caught

in Flynn's old bear-trap that Flynn and Hall had set behind the hut.

"By the Lord, but you are a keen one!" said Thorn. "How did you know?"

"I didn't know," whispered Hall, "but it came like a flash. It was a close call for me."

When they went inside Goldschmidt, too, was dead, for after wriggling free of the knife he was on the floor in his last kick.

And by now the other men were up, Kin Savvy with them, and the kitchen was full.

They told them how it happened, and Thorn and Hall went down to Waldo, and Hall said it was to tell the police. But he went first of all to the Waldo House and stood himself a drink, and then asked for Nelly.

"He has plenty savvy," said Ching to the Mexican.

And Kin Savvy nodded.

"And now Suls no more takee my pipe," said Ching.

THE AFFAIR AT BIG SPRINGS.

THE word "difficulty" has a peculiar technical meaning in Texas, and, indeed, in all the southern States of North America. It refers as a general rule to a row ending in murder or attempted murder; there is usually a six-shooter in it, and occasionally a knife. Sometimes in a Texas paper we read, let us say, that Colonel Smith is reported to have had a "difficulty" with Judge Moriarty on the previous day, and that the highly respected judge is not expected to survive more than twenty-four hours, owing to several severe wounds received while attempting to end the trouble in the bar of the Occidental. But this is usual and not over-romantic; even if the judge had succeeded in removing Colonel Smith's heart with his knife, it would never have created the excitement that the affair at Big Springs did. For in that there was a touch of the unusual; there was something

huge, something tempestuous, brilliant, elemental. Yet after all it was nothing more than a duel, if rather a strange one. But let me tell it you briefly.

Big Springs is about forty miles west of Colorado City in the south of the Texas Panhandle, and it is a local railroad centre, being, as is well known, the end of a division on the Texas and Pacific Railroad. This Texas-Pacific road runs thence to El Paso, the border town to Mexico across the "Rio Grande." But Big Springs is a rather tough place itself, if not so tough as the Inferno of the Border, and no one was ever surprised if the local paper had news of unexpected funerals in it. And when the strike was over there, a good deal of bad blood not yet extravasated in the streets threatened some obituary notices.

For Alexander MacGuire, one of the engineers, had not behaved squarely to his fellows when they ran their locomotives into the round-house and struck work. He had dissented vigorously. His language was the language of an American Irishman raised to the second power by his birth in the West. For he came from Dallas and was good with his tongue. He fought against the strike.

The others said it was nothing but pure "cussedness" and a general desire to have someone tread on the tail of his coat. He said that the strike was "damn foolishness."

"You men think you are the univarse," he shouted, "but Jay Gould owns you—"

"And you don't kick?" sneered Jim Grant.

"When I get a show," answered Alick savagely, "but we ain't got no show. And I'm busted, and, besides, I'll work anyhow."

"We reckon not," said some of the rest And then Alick climbed down and went out with the others. For there was something serious in the way they spoke.

"The truth o' this is," said Jim to his partner Willis, "that he manages to make more than any man is entitled to. That conductor Jones that's with him runs an accomdation train and bleeds the tramps like thunder. If the bosses knew, he would be fired."

"But we all work that racket," said Willis.

"Not to his tune," answered Jim. "I could tell you a pile about Alick and Jones. They're just daylight robbers."

So there wasn't much love lost between

Alick McGuire and the others when the strike petered out and they went back to work, fairly sickened of long idleness. It's not sweet to sweat in the rotten verandah of a rotten boarding-house and see one's hard-earned dollars melt like butter at noonday. And when the Company has law and order in the foreground with numbers of blacklegs in the background, it's about time to "squeal" and take water. For these are western idioms, and, being interpreted, they mean, to give in.

So Alick McGuire had his chance to say "I told you so." He said it and repeated it and rubbed it in, like salt into whipped backs, until the other engineers and firemen prayed for a wreck on the road to smash him into unanswering jelly.

And the crash came. But not their way, and though Willis and Jim Grant were both in it, only one came out of it with any chance of repair.

"There'll be trouble between Jim and that swine Alick," said Willis.

"There'll be trouble between me and that swine Grant," said Alick.

"There may be trouble between me and McGuire," said Grant. But he didn't want trouble, having a wife.

And with everyone looking for a "difficulty" and everyone expecting it, there was a chance of a battle, murder, and sudden death. The only reporter on the Big Springs paper used to fill up his spare time between drinking, type-setting, and reporting with theoretical accounts of the inevitable result. He began usually with "We greatly regret to learn," and usually ended with "Mr. Blank's funeral will take place to-morrow, on account of the hot weather." Occasionally he put in a variant: "The funerals will take place;" but when he was pessimistic his account ended with "Both the courageous combatants are expected to recove." He shot Grant through both lungs, he stabbed McGuire in various places, he sometimes hoped that a stray bullet might finish up his editor, who spent most of his time at the Depôt or thereabouts. But even in his most sanguine moments he never imagined that he would be able to fill a whole front page with details which would be copied verbatim into all the Lone Star State's daily papers, and even make a rattling good par for Chicago and New York newsmen. For sometimes a fact will lick Dalziel or the very maddest imagination on the wires.

It was Willis who had to be the hero of this tragedy, and when he went one night in August into the round-house to see if his fireman had No. 72 ready for the east-bound passenger, he heard rough talk, and dangerous talk, even before his eyes opened out to take in the darkness. For Grant had just come off the El Paso run, and had stumbled against McGuire, who was getting his locomotive ready for the west-bound passenger. And, unluckily, it was quite ready. Willis heard the east-bound passenger come in, and then he heard more.

"What's that you say?" cried Grant. And then Willis missed the rest, till he heard, "Won't I?" And then there was a shot, and yet two more. He waited a moment, and saw a dark figure run to McGuire's locomotive. And, running himself, he came upon Grant writhing on the ground.

"He called me a son of a——," said Grant groaning. "And he's done me up."

And then McGuire's engine moved out just as Grant sobbed his last breath. But Willis called to his fireman,—

"Run over to the Depôt and tell them McGuire has done up Grant. He's off. And I'm after him."

He left the dead man and went to his engine and opened her up. She ran out easily after McGuire's and came on to the single line.

But McGuire was wondering what he should do. Should he back up to the train which was waiting for him? Or should he run out into the plains and drop off and scoot out across the prairie. He knew they hated him, and he had killed the best-liked man in Big Springs. He felt what that meant. There wasn't a man in the town but would perjure himself, if need be, to get the right man hanged. And even if the law failed he would have no show.

Just then he saw No. 72 coming after him, and he knew what that meant too. For Willis always waited in the round-house till his train was ready. And now she was hardly due. Willis, too, was the man he feared most, for Willis had a hard record. He was a long, lean, fierce man, who was never respectful of life, not even of his own. And the pursuing locomotive was within fifty yards of him. He heard Willis shout, and he lost any nerve he had left. For Grant was first blood with him, and no man gets reckless and hard with his first man. It usually

takes a verdict of justifiable homicide and an acquittal to make anyone really dangerous.

He opened her out to the full, and was off west.

But at Big Springs there was a devil of a row going on, and of course no one knew what to do. The passengers on the east-bound express were savage at having to go before they found out what was wrong. For some of the tenderfeet on board the train wanted to see the corpse. They could have lived as heroes for the rest of their lives if they could have had a little hand in it. And the west-bound folks were mad as steers at being stuck in Big Springs until news came from the west to say what had happened. For with two wild devils on "wild engines" who could say what the end might be?

But the reporter was in his glory with a pad and a pencil. He came down flying, and gave four bits to the boy who had had the horse-sense to go to him right off. He wrote columns and imagined others. He wired to Fort Worth and to Dallas, and even farther.

Yet in the meantime the boss at the Depôt wired west to all the way stations to clear the line. And then he sat down and tried to think what else he ought to do. For he was

not a man of an original mind. He concluded to wire to Forth Worth for instructions from the Superintendent.

And now McGuire on his locomotive was tearing west at sixty miles an hour, and every moment the speed increased. He was mad at first, but in him was no true grit, and his nerves were not so good as they should be in a man who slays another in any country—certainly not good enough in a country where law, beginning to make itself felt, has an element of Judge Lynch in its quickness and severity. Besides, he had no money, and to kill out west without money is a bad business when it returns cent. per cent.

Yet the wild intoxication of that strange mad hour was in him, and he hooted as he fired up; and when he looked back and saw the steady glow of the pursuing locomotive, he jeered angrily. For did it not grow less and less yet? He swore that it did. Yet he wasn't sure—not quite sure.

And overhead was the starry heaven of pure calm, windless and quiet, while he was in a great created gale of wind that eddied about him and tore at his open jacket when he sweated at the fire or sweated with increasing fear.

He went through the first way station and blew a devilish screech on the whistle that roused the very steers camping under mesquite upon the prairie. And he went "hoot-hoot-hoot" upon his way, whistling as the engines do when stray stock gets on the track and they do not want to test the doubtful merits of the cow-catcher. But he could not scare away terror and the terror of darkness and alarm. No, nor the sickness of fear which very present death brought to him.

At the rate he went the locomotive seemed alive; she sweated and panted and trembled, devouring infinite space on the thin line of fragile rails leading to the devil. Never for a yard was she solid on the track; she sprang and quivered! He cursed the high joints and low centres, he damned in trembling rage the uneven eyes of section bosses in lining up. Never till now did he know how rough the T.P. ballasting was; never before had he recognized the chances daily taken on the road.

But though he looked forward through the glass and saw the darkness divided by his swift light, he still looked back. Could he dare stop her and then let her go again? Could he or not? And even as he thought

of it he saw the rising light of Justice on his track ; he began to think, for all his pride in the dreadful thing beneath him, that Willis's No. 72 could lay it out cold in a desperate and deadly race. For he knew Willis well ; he was a devil—yes, a tough, hard devil ; as tough as wire, as hard as hickory. He had the dead wood on him ; that seemed sure. The coward got rampant in the murderer ; he was ice in his heart ; he panted and sucked at the flying air. Yet now he was running nearer seventy than sixty miles an hour, and the roar of the wind was deafening. He opened his discouraged mouth, but was dumb as he shouted.

Willis now was not two miles behind him. And Willis knew he gained inch by inch. Yet what he should do if he came up with McGuire he hardly knew. Should he jam his locomotive right against the other and climb on and overpower him? No, for the other was armed. He was glad at least that McGuire's tender was part of his engine ; if he had run out with a separate tender he might have let it go and blocked the pursuer's way. He wondered that McGuire didn't stop her and jump. He wondered and then he swore at himself.

Just suppose, he said, that McGuire had slackened her even now, and had jumped after setting her going with an open throttle. He might have done that. Yes, he certainly might have done it. Yet he thought not and hoped not. He never thought of his own engine leaving the line, he felt so assured of victory. He meant to kill the man who had killed his partner. And now he began to see McGuire on ahead; he saw him plainly. He knew, too, that McGuire could see his flaring head-light. "Ah!" he said; "suppose—yes, suppose—"

And Willis laughed as he buttoned his coat.

He stepped outside his shelter, and began to fight his way forward through the choking wind, which grasped him as a wave takes a man to strangle him. It pressed him about as though it was solid; it made the muscles of his hands and arms crack. It almost tore him off, and he knew he would be swept away like a rag if he let go. And once his feet did leave the insecure foothold.

But at last he got right under the head-light, and then the compressed air held him. He reached up like a drowning man and extinguished the glare. He found himself

back by his fire as though he was in a dream. He felt like a man flung ashore by the sea after an hour's hard struggle.

But he blew his whistle with a long, long scream. And he laughed, for he thought that he might fool McGuire.

At the sound of the whistle behind him McGuire turned and saw no more the swift and terrible eye of Justice.

"He's ditched! He's ditched!" he screamed with sudden hope as he shot through another way station.

And after a mile he slacked her down.

"I'll jump when I can!" he cried to himself, and he waited for the moment.

Before it came he fired up again, and at the right moment he jumped. But before he left her he opened her out again. He jumped up from the ground, feeling dazed and stupid and bruised.

"Where am I?" he asked himself, and in his stupid amazement following the shock he wondered who he was and what he was doing there. He stared round and saw his engine disappearing in the west. And yet she made a rattle; there was even yet vibration in the shining rails. He turned, and, turning, stood foolishly as another dark engine came up to

him. What was it, and where was it going? "No," he cried, and then he knew that his time was at hand.

For Willis had been beforehand with him in his mind; he had euchred him that time, and though No. 72 was going fast, the avenger of blood shut off steam and jumped. He fell on McGuire and they rolled over heavily. McGuire screamed once and was silent.

And when Willis came to, he found a man with a broken neck lying underneath him.

THE DOCTOR OF RED CREEK.

THE miners were very melancholy in the Idaho saloon at Red Creek, and though almost as much poison was being consumed as usual, the conversation was most unwontedly subdued.

A long period of absolute silence was broken by Jim Arnold, one of the oldest pioneers of the settlement. "Boys, this'll never do! No, it won't wash. We'll have to fetch a doctor here, and do it soon."

"Ah, a doctor," said the bar-tender pensively, as he made a new experiment in the mixing of liquors. "I've often thought of it."

"But what's the good of a doctor now," said Milton the miner, "ain't the Siwash and Harry both dead? All the thundering docs between Panama and the Forty-Ninth Parallel can't bring them back across the border."

Jim shook his head impatiently.

"You're a good sort, Milton, but you've no head to speak of. It tires me to hear you talk. You ain't no foresight, no looking forward, no arrangin' for to-morrer. Because the Siwash shot Harry and because Harry blew four holes in the Siwash, it ain't no reason others of us won't be in the same way next week. And that's what I'm thinkin' of. If I'm shot or jabbed I don't want to linger. My motto is, 'Let's die or get well,' and a doctor is a comfort to a man—a wonderful comfort."

The whole melancholy gang agreed.

"But how to pay him, Jim?" asked the bar-keep.

"By results, sonny," said Jim. "He'd soon fix up a tariff—"

"Ay, so much for saving a man, and so much for easin' of him," suggested Milton. "But supposin' there wasn't no work for him?"

"Oh, don't suppose no dodrotted foolishness," cried Jim. "Is there ever a week goes by without an accident or a difficulty in this creek? And there's always delirious trimmings for the doctor to fall back on as a steady hold if there's no one hurt."

"That's so," said the crowd soberly, "there's always that."

And silence reigned for a space. It was only broken by the roar of the Red Creek coming down a banker and by the splash of the bar-tender's experiments as he poured mixed liquids from one glass into another.

But Jim spoke again after some ponderous thinking.

"It ain't no good sendin' down after a man, for some stray apothecary's apprentice would be run in on us. My notion is to advertise."

"Advertise!" echoed the crowd as they smoked and considered. "Ay, let's advertise."

"Let Billy drore it up for us," said Milton.

But the bar-tender shook his head hastily.

"If things didn't pan out good, you'd say it was me, and I'd be unpopular," he remarked. "And for a bar-tender to be unpopular ain't business. He might as well wear a dirty shirt."

He turned round and eyed his own spotless expanse of linen in the glass with much contentment.

"No," he added, "Jim Arnold has a head-piece. Let him fix the thing up and shove it in the *Flumeville Hurrah*."

"Ay, that's the most enterprising paper in the locality," said the crowd. "And the editor ain't no slouch of a man neither."

"He *kin* shoot," cried Milton admiringly.

"And for obituary notices afterwards—"

"He ain't no equal," said Milton. "And poetry too."

"I didn't think much of his poetry," cried Arnold. "And if I didn't like him I'd tell him so straight. But I don't hold with causing a difficulty with a friend over a matter of poetry that's meant well. Gimme a sheet of paper, Billy."

He spread himself on the end of the bar and was watched by the entire crowd as he wrote out the advertisement with two inches of a carpenter's pencil.

"Jim takes time to do it," whispered Milton loudly. "Now I'd have reckoned a thing like that wouldn't have cost him so much thinkin'."

"You never done no writin' that was to go in print, Milton, or you wouldn't open your mouth so wide," said Jim, who had overheard him.

The abashed Milton muttered an apology, and Jim scratched out a line and began again.

"How'll this do, boys?" he asked presently.

"Spit it out," said the boys, leaning back and preparing to admire.

Jim coughed and read it.

"To Doctors.—Wanted in a mining camp where difficulties is frequent, a well educated doctor, bringing his own bullet extractors, who will do what's necessary on a fixed and reasonable tariff. Must be sober and industrious, and good at delirious trimmings in all its branches. Employment guaranteed by the entire camp. Apply in the first instance to Miner, care of the editor."

A hum of applause greeted the conclusion, and Jim looked pleased.

"So you think it'll do?" he asked modestly.

"It's pure literature," said the bar-tender with enthusiasm. "I never thought it was in you, Jim. But I'd put *are* instead of *is* after difficulties."

"Why?" asked Jim in surprise.

"Because it's usual in print," said Billy firmly.

"And what about accidents?" asked one of the crowd; "you don't seem to hint at them."

"That's true, I forgot," said Jim, and he inserted "accidents." "And I've put it 'are,' to please you, Billy. Is there any other amendment, boys?"

"No," said the crowd.

"Then I'll put it as the resolution as is before the meeting, and declare it carried," said Jim. "Them as is for it can say 'Aye,' and them that's against it, 'No.'"

"But if any one says 'No,' there'll be trouble," said Milton firmly. And nobody did.

The advertisement appeared in the next issue of the *Hurrah*, and a week afterwards the editor sent a small packet of letters down to Red Creek. Jim Arnold called a meeting at the saloon to consider them.

"These are the replies to our advertisement, boys," he remarked as he untied a red handkerchief and poured the letters on the bar. "Me and Billy here resolved ourselves into a committee of two, and have sorted 'em out to save time. For some was obviously no good, the language and the spellin' givin' the writers away at once. But there's two or three that might suit. And one I'm strong on myself. For I admire the man's style."

"Let's hear them," cried the anxious crowd. "Shut up, all, and listen."

Jim gave them two ordinary letters in a perfunctory fashion and then threw out his chest.

"They're good enough, boys, if we can't fix it up any better. But I've a letter here from a

doctor we think (Billy and me) would be an acquisition to the camp, and to any camp between Cariboo and Arizona. Ain't that so, Billy?"

"It is," said the bar-tender.

And Jim began reading in his best style:

"SIR,—In answer to your advertisement in the *Hurrah*, I'm ready to undertake the job at reasonable prices. I'm very good at gunshot and knife wounds, having had experience in South America during the Chilian war. My special line is delirium tremens. I can drink in moderation and shoot straight and lick most men of my weight and years, being now thirty and pretty active. An early answer will oblige,

"Yours truly,

"HENRY SARLE."

"There," said the bar-tender, "what did I tell you? Ain't that the letter of a *man*?"

"It's a slashing good letter," agreed the meeting, "a derned good letter. But what's his weight?"

"Gentlemen, I beg your pardon," cried Jim. "He's put it in a postscript. He weighs 220 pounds."

That settled it.

"Let's have him," they cried with one accord. "We don't want no little whip-stick of a chap to handle a man like Mihon when he's got 'em."

"Why, no," said Milton promptly. "I take some handling then: that's a fact."

"He's down at Spokane," resumed Jim when quiet was restored. "So we can have him up in a week. I'll write to him at once."

And in eight days more the camp knocked off work to welcome the doctor, who rode in from Flumeville on a mule escorted by Arnold and Milton.

"So you're an Englishman?" said Jim, who was a little disappointed at the fact.

"I am," said Sarle, "and moderately proud of it."

"Hum," replied Jim, "there ain't no need to be *too* proud of it in the camp. We're mostly Americans, and some of us like getting fun out of Britishers."

"They're welcome," said Sarle sternly, "but if any man runs in a quarrel on me and I hurt him, I shall charge him just twice as much to cure him as if another man had done it."

"Good, very good!" cried Milton. "Shake hands, doctor. I like you. I'd like to see

any son of a gun throw it in your teeth that you're not American. Why, you are American, to the hair and nails!"

And he nodded joyfully to Jim.

"Oh, what luck!" he cried. "I'll go on ahead. We're right there now."

He galloped his old mule down a break-neck path, and in twenty minutes charged into the crowd outside the saloon.

"He's coming and he's a daisy," he cried, "but he's a Britisher. And I want you, boys, to know that he ain't ashamed of it. And by the eye of him I reckon he kin shoot. His grip too is like getting your fist where a wedge ought to be. So don't you think that you can play any games off'n him."

"We don't want to play no games off on him," said the boys, "but did you see his extractors?"

Milton nodded and went for a drink. While he was inside he heard a cheer raised.

"Here he comes, Billy," he cried. "Get up the champagne." And running out he found Jim and Sarle the centre of the entire camp. The doctor was going through the ceremony of shaking hands with fifty men, every one desirous of seeing whether his grip was as strong as Milton had said it was. He

came out of the trying ordeal with flying colours, for more than one of the most daring retired to the outskirts of the crowd to test each finger separately for fractures.

They took him into the saloon and introduced him to Billy, who had not thought it consonant with his dignity to mingle with the outside crowd.

"We are glad to see you, sir," said the bar-tender, "for this raises Red Creek in the scale. There's no other camp has its own doctor. We will now drink to your health."

They drank solemnly at the expense of the saloon, and then Sarle spoke:

"Gentlemen, I'm glad to come among you, though barring accidents and difficulties I see little prospect of making my fortune. For you look strong and healthy. And now it's my turn to set up the drinks. Step up, boys, and select your own especial juice. And if you will join, Mr. Bar-tender, I shall take it as a favour!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the crowd, and then they drank.

"I tell you he's a fair scorcher," said Milton. "And what a head Jim has to have picked on the very man we wanted!"

The doctor slept in the hotel and in the

daytime wandered round the various claims. Or perhaps he went antelope hunting. For at least three days he had no patients.

"But don't get alarmed about that, doc," said Milton, whose admiration for Sarle increased day by day; "don't you worry yourself, and especial don't get no notion we've deceived you as to the prospects here. For they're good!"

"They've got to be," said Sarle with a grim smile; "I should hate to have to resort to any harsh measures if the camp isn't according to specification. For I'm no idler. I want work."

"That's so," cried Milton. "You're a man, you are, Sarle. That's what I like about you. You're a rustler from way back!"

He went off to Jim's claim.

"I've a notion our doc is getting weary, Jim," he said to his friend, "he's complaining of having no work. And he's practising at the back of the saloon with his pistol. Shoot! I should say so! He'll be winging some of us likely. He's no real Britisher; at any rate he's as good as an American, though I say it."

"He don't talk of quittin'?" asked Jim.

"Not exactly," replied Milton; "he'll score

off some before he shifts. He was kind of hintin' to me of false pretences in that prospectus of yours which led him on to take shares in the camp."

Jim looked worried.

"I wouldn't hev him think it for worlds," he said after deep reflection. "We'll h_v to get up a game of poker and jest loose off a few ca'tridges to encourage him."

"But who's to be hurt?" asked Milton anxiously.

"Why, no one, partner."

Milton smiled.

"What's the use of that?" he asked contemptuously. "He's no greenhorn to have a put-up job like that played on him. Someone has got to be hurt really. I can't think what's come to us: the camp's just rotten with good nature."

"And before he come up," cried Jim gloomily, "no man could feel safe that he wouldn't pull on some one before night. I feel thishyer peaceful influence myself. But I'll set up the drinks free to-night, and if nothin' else occurs, old Simpson may get the jimjams. He's a moderate handful when he's that way."

"And it'll soothe Sarle a piece, anyhow,"

said Milton, "but what he real hankers after is to use them extractors of his."

Jim shivered and held up his hand.

"That's what's done it," he declared, "it's that wicked shiny lot of knives and things as has cowed the camp. Didn't you feel cold about the spine yourself when you see'd 'em?"

"I did," said Milton, "I own it freely."

"I've felt hampered in my mind ever since," cried Jim.

"That's so," said Milton, "but he's a splendid chap, Jim, and to hear him talk is a new eddication. So-long, we'll see you to-night!

But the drinking was no great success. It is true that Simpson required treatment in the night for alcoholic poisoning, but the others showed no particular thirst. They drank with caution, and picked their words.

"What's wrong with the boys?" asked Billy in astonishment.

"It's the knives, Billy," whispered Milton.

"What knives?"

"The doc's knives, Billy. Every man here funks getting hurt for fear of them."

"Do you?"

"I do. I own it freely," said Milton. "He's

a splendid chap, but he mightn't be a tender hand with them extractors. That's what scares us."

And the first real job that Sarle got came from the neighbouring camp some five miles away. A deputation rode down on mules, and made straight for the saloon.

"Where's that doctor of yours?" asked the spokesman.

"Round the camp somewhere!" answered Billy.

"Well, we want him. Can you find him for us?"

"I don't think he's allowed to attend other camps," said Billy. "I heard that was in the contract. You'd better see Jim Arnold. That's him over yonder."

"We want the loan of your doctor," said the old miner after passing the time of day with Jim. "There's a man at our camp bin shot."

"Jim's face lightened up.

"B'gosh, you relieve my mind!" he cried. "I'll fetch him. Oh, here he is! Doctor, do you mind going five miles to 'tend a man that's shot?"

"Not I," said Sarle. "I'll fetch my instruments."

When he was out of earshot Jim spoke to the deputation. "According to the tariff here, his fee will be a hundred dollars, and you'll have to give him mileage too."

"Money ain't no object," said the head of the party, "for it's my brother."

"And just send us word if he's tender with him, will you?" asked Jim.

"He'll have to be," said the leader sternly.

"Mind you don't make no fatal error about him," said Jim, "for he's the best and quickest shot here, so I warn you. But here he comes."

When Sarle returned that night he brought a note for Jim. It was from the brother of the wounded man. The doctor had to decipher it.

"He done the job neat enough, but he made Bob howl considerable. We've paid him fifty on account, and he's contracted to be paid by results."

"P.S.—Bob ain't howling any now."

Sarle laughed, but Jim squirmed a little.

"Did you hurt him, doc?"

"Well, I should smile," said Sarle in the vernacular. "What do you suppose?"

On Sunday most of the men sneaked off to the other camp to interview the wounded man, who was rapidly recovering.

"But what he said scared me," cried Milton. "I own it freely." And nothing but a couple of fractured limbs broke the monotony of the camp for ten days. Sarle got sulky and drank more cocktails than were good for him.

"It's gettin' on the poor chap's narves," said Jim; "he's a big man and wants work. He'll be breakin' out most desperate afore long. I've seen it, eh, I've seen it. You look out, you chaps!"

"It's well *he* drinks something," growled the gloomy bar-tender. "I'm not takin' half I was before you fetched him up. Theshyer's a spoiled camp. I had a letter from Geary at Helena complainin' bitterly of the fallin' off in what I send him."

"Did he now?"

"He did," said Billy, "and he talked of closing down."

This dreadful hint spread consternation through the camp and the drinking greatly increased. Life wouldn't be worth living without the saloon, said the miners, and in the evening things looked much better; there was a game of stud-horse poker running, and two promising rows were only broken up by Milton's indiscreet allusion to "extractors." But a little after midnight

there was a sudden "rough house," with Sarle in the thick of it. Bottles and glasses flew, several shots were fired, and before Billy could douse the lights, one man was killed, seven wounded, and several severely hurt. When peace was restored and Billy re-lighted the lamps, Sarle was seen standing on a cask in the corner of the room with his six-shooter in his hand.

"Come down, Sarle, there's no row now," cried Billy.

"Not much, there isn't," said Sarle, glaring. "I've settled it. This'll teach the camp to fetch a man up here and promise him work. All I hope is that no one's dead."

"Only a stranger," said Milton, who had a bullet wound in his arm. "Only a stranger, and it was him as really started it."

When they got the wounded sorted out it was found that six were shot in the arm.

"It's an extraordinary coincidence," said Sarle with a grin as he buzzed round his temporary hospital. He was now sober and happy.

Jim grunted and bore being handled better than he expected. "It ain't no coincidence, if I'm a judge of 'em," he said significantly.

"What man among us could hit six other chaps in the same place?"

"Sarle could, now couldn't you?" asked Milton admiringly.

"It's likely," said Sarle, "if I was put to it—"

"By havin' no work," shoved in Jim, shaking his head. "But it does look like old times."

"That's so," said the crowd faintly. "It's the best row we've had for nigh on to a year."

"And everybody satisfied," said Jim contentedly "We're not the sort to growl, doctor, seeing as we brought you here. I must say you're a first-class hand. Did I howl any?"

"Not a howl," said Sarle, with a pleased smile.

"Then that's all right," murmured Jim.

But when Sarle went out Jim spoke from his temporary couch.

"This'll never do, boys. He's hurt more in thirty seconds than he'll cure in a fortnight. And on the tariff he'll clean out the camp."

"I reckon you'd better ask him what he'll take to bust the contract," said Billy. "And somebody's got to pay for my mirrors."

"We'll make it up to you when we're

well," said the crowd. And they got well very rapidly. When he could leave them, Sarle went off hunting and did not return for two days.

"The camp's sendin' you a deputation to-night," Billy told him.

"What about?" asked the doctor.

"I don't rightly know," cried Billy. "But they hope you'll take it kindly."

The deputation came in about seven o'clock, and Jim of course was spokesman.

"Did you have good sport?" he asked nervously.

"Only moderate," said the doctor; "but what's wrong?"

Milton slouched into the saloon.

"I'm not in this, doc, so mind; I'm for you every time."

Jim shook his head.

"Don't act like a galoot, Milton," he cried irritably. "Who's agin the doctor? Why, none! He's out and away the most popular man here, and Billy himself will own to it. But—"

"What?" asked Sarle.

"Well, it's this way, doc," burst out Jim, "as I say, you're out and away the most popular man here, but even if so we would

reckon it as a favour if you'd break the contract and take a bonus to quit."

"I don't say so," put in Milton.

"Oh, dry up, old man," said Jim. "Because, doctor, to tell the truth, you've caused more general and widespread devastation in thish-yer camp than we ever done in the rowdiest of times. We're proud of you and think you a fine man, and we've no grievance against your way of handling those skeary-looking instruments of yours, but it's common knowledge as you shot six of us and done it neat, and it broke up the work most unexpected. We lost considerable time over getting well. Oh no, we don't mean as you was long curing us, but it was lost time all the same. So we wanted to know if you'd take it crooked if we asked you to quit. Have I put it rightly, boys?"

The crowd looked shamefaced, but agreed.

"No," said Milton, "and I don't agree with breaking contracts."

Jim shook his head impatiently.

"It's for the doctor to speak, Milton," he cried. "Say just what you think, doctor."

Earle seemed rather melancholy.

"I've had a good time here, boys," he said presently, "and I'm not so keen on going

But since you put it as you do, we'll say no more about the contract. I'll quit."

"But we pay for results," said Jim, "however caused."

"However caused," echoed the deputation.

"And we'll give you a bonus of two hundred and fifty dollars," added Jim.

"It's very good of you," cried the doctor.

"Not at all," said Jim. "It's cheap at the price. And we like you and are sorry to part. So now we'll have a liquor all round. Set them up, Billy. Champagne as when the doctor came."

Milton walked over to Sarle.

"It ain't my fault, doc. You believe that?"

"I do," said Sarle.

"Because I like you."

Jim grunted.

"You've no call to cast a slur on the Creek by sayin' no such thing, Milton. I'd like to see the man as would dare to say he don't like him."

"Ay, we'd all like to see that man," cried the deputation.

"Here's to you, doctor."

Gilbert & Rivington, Ltd., St. John's House, Clerkenwell, E.C.